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SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION
WITHIN ORTHODOX
THEOLOGY

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WITHIN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

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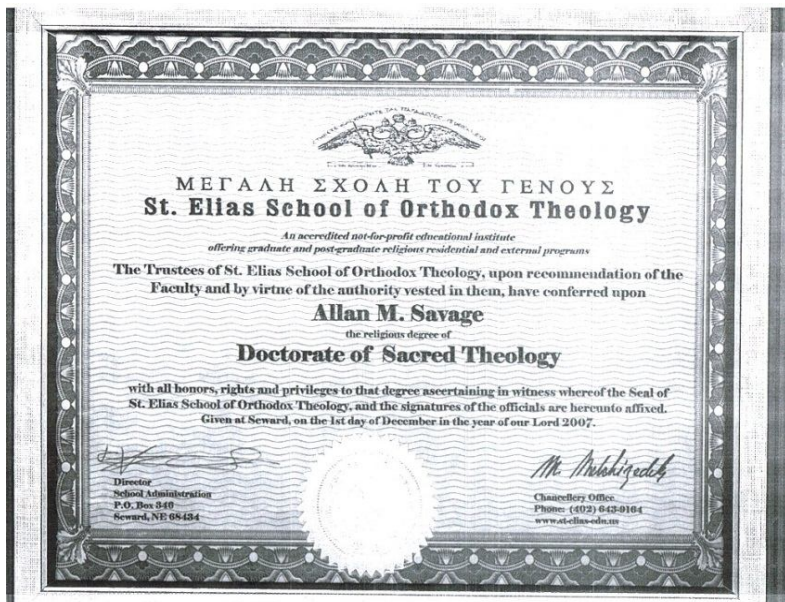
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PHENOMENOLOGY AND
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION
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A Dissertation Fulfilling the
Requirements for the Degree of
Sacrae Theologiae Doctor
(Doctorate of Sacred Theology)

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(Eparchy of Nebraska)

By

Allan M. Savage

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ABSTRACT

Even though philosophy is of secondary importance with Orthodox theology, the philosophical perspective held by the theologian affects the theological interpretation given to experience. The philosophical understanding that supports Western contemporary interpretation and social construction of experience is no longer sustainable given the outdated perspective scholasticism that is dominant in the West. I suggest that an alternative view, a phenomenological method of interpretation, is not only more sustainable for Orthodox theological interpretation but that it reflects more accurately the Patristic perspective upon which Orthodox theology depends. To demonstrate this, I investigate two contemporary Orthodox theological issues, Ecology and Canon Law, from a phenomenological perspective. Within these topics I investigate language as participatory, not descriptive; epistemology as being, not knowing; and interpretation as continual, not fixed.

For reasons summarized in Part Three of the Dissertation I conclude that a phenomenological philosophical approach is proper to the interpretation of Orthodox theology. Avoidance of the scholastic perspective by the phenomenological approach prevents misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Orthodox religious experience. This is achieved through the proper social construction of the *ecclesia* that mediates and provides the locus for Orthodox theological understanding. In addition to the proper social construction of the community of the faithful within a phenomenological approach there is the proper development of the person as a member of the community of the faithful. A secondary conclusion I make is that a phenomenological approach is useful to contemporary Latin or Western theological interpretation.

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PART ONE

PHENOMENOLOGY IN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

The Interpretive Phenomenology of the Orthodox Theologian

By Way of Introduction

This introduction is needed because philosophy, as it is understood in the Western academic tradition, is of primary importance to theology, whereas it is of secondary importance within Orthodoxy.¹ Although, in the West, disciplines other than philosophy, such as psychology and sociology, are becoming support structures for theological thinking thus reducing philosophy to a secondary significance. A Western philosopher, Etienne Gilson, moves to redress this secondary significance of philosophy by establishing its proper relationship to theology in an insightful essay entitled, “On Behalf of the Handmaid.”² This introduction is also needed because this dissertation is undertaken by a Catholic theologian, formed in the Western classical philosophical tradition, who has come to appreciate the potential and wholesome contribution that the Eastern Orthodox experience is capable of making to the Western Church. Philosophy, being perceived as secondary importance in the

¹ Spencer Estabrooks, St. Arseny Orthodox Christian Theological Institute, Winnipeg, MB., in private correspondence with the researcher in 2007.

² Gilson writes: “I propose to suggest as an answer that perhaps we are expecting from the handmaid more services than she can possibly render, especially given the circumstances under which we are now obliging her to work.” Etienne Gilson, “On Behalf of the Handmaid,” in *Theology of Renewal: Renewal of Religious Thought*, Vol. 1, ed. L. K. Shook (Montréal: Palm Publishers, 1968), 237.

East, however, does not suggest its neglect by Eastern thinkers but, rather, being perceived of secondary importance draws attention to the various philosophical attitudes as they have developed and evolved within the culture in which they have arisen. From our own experience we know that a proper philosophical awareness alerts us to error. I speak of an awareness of philosophical attitudes, not philosophical systems. In this dissertation an examination of philosophical awareness is made from the point of view of social construction, not theoretical knowledge. By social construction I mean what Paul Boghossian has described as a core notion of activity dependent on aspects of our social context. He writes:

To say of something that it is socially constructed is to emphasize its dependence on contingent aspects of our social selves....The inevitable contrast is with a naturally existing object, something that exists independently of us and which we did not have hand in shaping.³

In social construction the emphasis is on activity. Social construction is something only persons can undertake as individuals acting in concert with other individuals.⁴ As well, in the same article, he distinguishes between the social constructionist's claim that is metaphysically grounded, (something is real but of our own creation), and a claim that is epistemologically grounded, (the correct explanation for why we have some particular belief). Without doubt this latter view is of particular interest to Orthodox believers. The significance of this

³ Paul Boghossian. "What is Social Construction?" (Monograph) <<http://as.nyu.edu/docs/IO/1153/socialconstruction.pdf>> (28 Sept., 2007).

⁴ Richard Prust suggests this in his book that proposes that phenomenological understanding is a new philosophical tool to understand the social construction of character.

distinction to Orthodox believers will become evident as the argument of this dissertation proceeds.

To that end, I undertake an examination of philosophical awareness as an exercise in phenomenology which is an existential approach not committed to any particular philosophical system but, rather, opposes “the acceptance of unobservable matters and grand systems erected in speculative thinking.”⁵ An exercise in phenomenological philosophical interpretation is focused on an internal personal awareness, as opposed to an external ideological construct. Classical ideological constructs, unlike, phenomenological constructions, tend to take on a reality independent of the active participant. In short, a phenomenological approach characterizes the Eastern theological interpretation, whereas, an ideological approach, characterizes the Western theological interpretation. More will be said about this later.

The dominant philosophical tradition of Eastern and Western Europe is Hellenist. Our present context is the product of the evolution of this Hellenist way of thinking. As a result of this evolutionary way of thinking we possess an historical understanding of our world that was unavailable to the ancient Hellenic thinkers themselves, both Socratic and Presocratic. In support of this view, Catherine Osborne notes that the Presocratic Philosophers “did not call themselves ‘philosophers’, or not in our sense of that word, nor did they have a conception of ‘philosophy’ as a definite range of inquiries. Instead, they set out in search of wisdom, what they called ‘sophia.’”⁶ As well,

⁵ “Seven Widely Accepted Features of the Phenomenological Approach.” Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology. <<http://www.phenomenologycenter.org/>> (28 Sept., 2007).

⁶ Catherine Osborne, *Presocratic Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), ii.

often forgotten by contemporary philosophers is that not all ancient thinkers followed Aristotle's understanding that an action precedes its potentiality. This Aristotelian understanding, that action precedes potentiality, developed into a metaphysical ideology that has come to characterize academic Western thinking with roots in Aristotle's notion of an "unmoved mover." John Meyendorff notes that Aristotle's thought re-entered the Western intellectual tradition through an Islamic filter, as it were. This is not the philosophical evolutionary pattern of the East. Even though Byzantine scholars were aware of Arabic writings there was little influence from Islamic thought. He writes that "the Byzantines were always able to have direct access to ancient Greek philosophy and never needed, like the Latins, to 'discover' Aristotle by way of Arabic translation and commentaries."⁷ Thus, in the East there has always been available other ways to understand one's experience than through a Western metaphysical ideology. One may understand experience through an epistemological interpretation or through a poetic interpretation both of which precede any metaphysical ideology. The latter, a poetic interpretation, has proven to be the evolutionary forerunner of the former, an epistemological interpretation. One's experience is rendered concrete in a social construction of relationships as phenomenological activity, rather than through the social construction of a metaphysical ideology.

In contrast to Aristotle's understanding, John Anton notes that Theophrastus, (circa 370–285 BCE), a Greek philosopher of the Peripatetic school and the immediate successor of Aristotle, (384–322 BCE), at the Lyceum,

⁷ John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary, 1996), 77.

understood that the nature of beings, that is, their purpose need not be identified as a socially constructed hierarchy. Rather, “the purpose of natural beings is basically the producing of offsprings like themselves.”⁸ Hannah Arendt expresses the same notion in discussing “the natural fertility of the *animal laborans*, whose strength is not exhausted and whose time is not consumed when it has reproduced its own life,” as it relates to Stoic and Epicurean philosophy.⁹ There is no understanding of social evolution in producing offspring like ourselves, but rather an immovable ground is provided for the development of an ideology. Further, in support of this perspective, according to Donald Blakeley, Plotinus, (circa 205-270), held that the order and harmony of the universe was not centred on satisfying human needs and preferences but order and harmony operated independently of human needs and preferences. Yet, this is not to be taken to suggest a lack of human interest in the activity encountered in the world, Blakeley notes.¹⁰ The interest in activity encountered in the world would eventually give rise to phenomenological understanding of the role of social construction in the world. But more on this later.

In our day there is need for theologically educated, not merely theologically informed, Orthodox theologians to critically address environmental issues and canonical

⁸ John Anton, “Aristotle and Theophrastus on Ecology,” in *Philosophy and Ecology: Greek Philosophy and the Environment*, Vol. 1, eds. Konstantine Boudouris and Kostas Kalimtzis (Athens: International Centre for Greek Philosophy, 1999), 22.

⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 112.

¹⁰ Donald Blakeley, “Plotinus and the Environment” in *Philosophy and Ecology: Greek Philosophy and the Environment*, Vol. 1, eds. Konstantine Boudouris and Kostas Kalimtzis (Athens: International Centre for Greek Philosophy, 1999), 32.

interpretation within Orthodoxy. Theologically educated theologians construct their experience so as to lead them to the light and come to be formed by their experiences. The former activity, “being led to the light,” is active awareness, whereas, the latter activity, “being formed by experience,” is passive awareness. Each is distinguishable, but not separable, in life’s experience. Within ecological understanding and canonical interpretation there is need to re-conceptualize our relationships with our community and the world in which we live. Such re-conceptualization is attempted in this dissertation. First, I note that education, for Plato, (circa 428-348 BCE), is an act of turning the mind in the right direction to harmonize the activity of the soul and to conform to the clearly defined teleological boundaries of one’s place in the community. In Plato’s educational view the common good takes precedence over the particular and individual good.¹¹ The ancient Greek philosophers viewed nature as a “theatre of the gods” or as a “theatre of reason” which enclosed both human activity and the activity of the gods within the cosmos. Further, the notion of “necessity” that dominated Hellenic thinking, to all intents and purposes, to the point of impeding any option, alteration or change, remains influential to this day. Secondly, I note that the above understanding is in contrast to the Hebraic view of the world where God (Yahweh) works “outside” of nature cooperating with individuals and communities to create a better future. The Hebraic view of the world is active; whereas, the Hellenic view of the world is static. Thus, it would seem that, in the Hellenic view any notion of humanity socially constructing a relationship

¹¹ Geoff Bowe, “A Platonic Approach to Environmental Education” in *Philosophy and Ecology: Greek Philosophy and the Environment*, Vol. 1, ed. Konstantine Boudouris and Kostas Kalimtzis (Athens: International Centre for Greek Philosophy, 1999), 43-50.

with the gods that reflects a co-creator relationship is not possible.¹² As Jane Harrison has written: “Greek writers of the fifth century B. C. have a way of speaking of, an attitude towards, religion, as though it were wholly a thing of joyful confidence, a friendly fellowship with the gods, whose service is but a high festival for man.”¹³ The same author notes that Thucydides, (circa 460-395 BCE), and Xenophon, (circa 431-355 BCE), sought no definition of religion as such, but that Socrates, (circa 470-399), did. Socrates taught that “piety and holiness are ‘a sort of tendance [*therapeia*] of the gods.’ This ‘tendance,’ Socrates presses on, ‘must be of the nature of service or ministration,’ and the *Euthyphro* adds that it is the sort of service that servants show their masters.”¹⁴ As Hannah Arendt puts it: “For mortals, the ‘easy life of the [Hellenic] gods’ would be a lifeless life.”¹⁵ Thus, from an Orthodox theological perspective there is no opportunity for divinization here in Hellenic philosophical thought.

Among the earliest Ionian philosophers, Anaximander (circa 610-546 BCE), Anaximenes (circa 585-525BCE), and Thales (circa 624-546 BCE), are understood to be monists in that

¹² Philippe Crabbé, “Biblical and Ancient Greek Thought about Natural Resources and the Environment and the Latter’s Continuity in the Economic Literature up to the Physiocrats” in *Philosophy and Ecology: Greek Philosophy and the Environment*, Vol. 1, ed. Konstantine Boudouris and Kostas Kalimtzis (Athens: International Centre for Greek Philosophy, 1999), 51-69.

¹³ Jane Harrison, “Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion” in *The World Treasury of Modern Religious Thought*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1990), 181.

¹⁴ Jane Harrison, “Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion” in *The World Treasury of Modern Religious Thought*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1990), 182.

¹⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 120.

they accepted that there is a basic or common principle intrinsic to all things. According to Aven Arntzen, although these philosophers recognized a dimension of existence beyond the material or physical, this, of itself, did not amount to a dualistic view of the world of the type that came to be almost universalized by René Descartes.¹⁶ From the point of Aristotelian philosophy, humans are not merely to live, but they are to live well. That is, human acts are to be undertaken in accordance with virtue and individuals ought not to dominate others but live in harmonious co-existence with others.¹⁷ From a phenomenological perspective, however, such acts of harmony arise within a conscious social construction on the part of the individual and on the part of the community. They are not theoretically given. To undertake human social construction authentically, and in an Orthodox manner, we must no longer consider truth as theoretical “representation” of that which is divinity. Rather, we are required to experience truth in Martin Heidegger’s sense of leaving the question of the definition of God open so that God may freely act. James Robinson notes:

Not only does Heidegger explicitly reject the attribution to him of atheism; he even goes on to say that his leaving open the question as to God is not a matter of indifference,

¹⁶ Aven Arntzen, “Is Presocratic Philosophy of Nature a Source of Nature Dualism?” in *Philosophy and Ecology: Greek Philosophy and the Environment*, Vol. 2, ed. Konstantine Boudouris and Kostas Kalimtzis (Athens: International Centre for Greek Philosophy, 1999), 23.

¹⁷ Boudouris, Konstantine, “The Moral, Political and Metaphysical Causes of the Ecological Crisis” in *Philosophy and Ecology: Greek Philosophy and the Environment*, Vol. 2, ed. Konstantine Boudouris and Kostas Kalimtzis (Athens: International Centre for Greek Philosophy, 1999), 59-72.

but is rather intended to point out that a more adequate category than metaphysics is needed for theology.¹⁸

The point of this dissertation is to demonstrate that the “more adequate category than metaphysics” is the phenomenological approach in which we encounter the activity of God. In ancient Hellenic philosophy there was more than one philosophical point of view. The Presocratic philosophers witness to this. The academically dominant Western scholastic understanding of truth as “representation,” to which the Orthodox theologian is exposed, needs to be resisted in favour of an understanding of truth disclosed through an historical evolutionary awareness and, not in a theoretical, non-evolutionary and non-historical context. In other words, a non-western, (ie, non-theoretical), social construction is required for the Orthodox interpretation of experience. George Maloney notes that “new theological problems arose out of the western cultures to challenge Orthodox thinkers. The Orthodox faith clashed with secularism and in many cases there was initially a lack of theologians capable of producing a more creative theology with viable and meaningful answers.”¹⁹ However, Orthodox theologians turn to Patristic theological understanding to generate a more creative theology with viable and meaningful answers. Patristic theological understanding is rooted in ancient Hellenic philosophy, which in turn, is aware of the possibility of alternative understandings. The following observations about ancient Hellenic philosophy have influenced the arguments advanced throughout this dissertation.

¹⁸ James Robinson and John Cobb, ed., *The Later Heidegger and Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 35.

¹⁹ George Maloney, *A History of Orthodox Theology Since 1453* (Belmont, MA: Norland, 1976), 319.

First, this study is undertaken in a philosophical way of thinking that is not foreign to Orthodoxy. This study is intended to assist those Orthodox theologians who, following Alexander Schmemmann's mind, seek to escape from "the Babylonian Captivity of Orthodox theology to Western Scholasticism."²⁰ This study encourages a philosophy that is suited to the temperament of Orthodoxy and thus better adapted to the personal growth of the Orthodox believer. Secondly, a phenomenological approach to theological understanding does not "encapsulate" theological understanding. To encapsulate notions suggests a theoretical and ideological understanding. A phenomenological approach liberates and does not constrain our understanding. The Orthodox theologian seeks to experience truth from the standpoint of the Gospel and tradition according to Thomas Hopko.²¹ In its historical development outside its homeland, that is, in the diaspora, Orthodox theological understanding has developed as a minority point of view within a Western philosophical context. However, it has managed to preserve its distinct Patristic characteristics despite being surrounded by a scholastic philosophy that is steeped in the Aristotelian tradition. Thirdly, within the European and American philosophical climate, developments are taking place that reflect less of the Aristotelian perspective, and disclose more of the phenomenological European perspective. This philosophical climate, favouring phenomenology, aids in Orthodox theological interpretation. In addressing the interpretation of ecclesial texts, documents, and their contexts, in

²⁰ Quoted by Ephrem Lash, "Liturgy at Elsinore," *New Blackfriars* 88, No. 1014 (2007): 151.

²¹ Thomas Hopko, *Orthodoxy in Post-Modern Pluralistic Societies*. St Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary Home Page, <<http://www.svots.edu>> (28 Sept., 2007).

short, Tradition, the ultimate purpose of phenomenological understanding is to help the theologian gain an appreciation of the social construction of the texts, documents, and their contexts, such as may have been lost over time. To recover a more ancient theological interpretation is my intent in this dissertation as I consider a phenomenological philosophical vantage point from which to address the two separate questions of ecological theology and canon law. It is worth noting that during the initial inquiries for this research topic, among Western theologians, more than once the question was put to me: What motivates a Latin theologian to address philosophical issues of Eastern Orthodox concern? That such a question is still asked suggests that the optimism expressed by the Melkite Patriarch Maximos IV, over the proposed schema *De Oecumenismo*, at Vatican II, has yet to reach many post-Vatican II Catholic theologians. The Patriarch wrote at the 69th General Session, (18 November 1963), that:

This schema is the sign that we Catholics have finally emerged from the period of sterile polemics with regard to both our Orthodox brethren of the East and the communities born of the 16th century crisis, polemics that have excessively influenced a unilateral development of theology, discipline, and even of spirituality.²²

My motivation in studying the questions of ecological theology and canon law through a phenomenological interpretation follows upon the mind of Plato who, in his *Apologia*, has Socrates say that “the unexamined life is not worth living.”²³ Further, I undertake my investigation from the perspective of the

²² Maximos IV, Chapter 12: Ecumenism. “The Requirements for Union, The Melkite Church at the Council,”
<<http://www.melkite.org/xCouncil/CouncilIntro.htm>> (28 Sept., 2007).

²³ Plato, *Apologia* 38a.

pastoral theological hermeneutics of Donald Capps.²⁴ He suggests abandoning the traditional western perspective in which one has been schooled and undertakes a theological diagnosis to expose the inadequate formulations of the problem while constructing adequate formulations.²⁵ I propose that this may be done by a phenomenological approach that replaces theoretical interpretation.

Churches with an established ecclesial tradition, Latin and Orthodox, are examining the social construction of their rituals and beliefs. In the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church this is evidenced in that the Second Vatican Council recognized that a more satisfactory understanding of religious practice is one of the particularly cogent reasons for undertaking the reform and promotion of the liturgy.²⁶ As well, from time to time newspapers discuss Orthodox religious issues as significant news items of Orthodox contribution to belief in the modern world. In an academic context, as opposed to a popular context, Joseph Woodill and Paul Tarazi, Orthodox theologians, provide evidence of the same phenomenon in articles that they have written about the liturgy and the lectionary.²⁷ As well, religious

²⁴ Donald Capps, *Pastoral Care and Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 67.

²⁵ There is a legitimate theological parallel in Christian Orthodox thinking according to Edward Moore who writes “when I call for the discarding of certain aspects of our Tradition, I do so only on the basis of my conviction that certain doctrines have outlived their usefulness for the Church.” Edward Moore, “Defining Orthodoxy: Is It Possible?” *Theandros: An Online Journal of Orthodox Christian Theology and Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2003), <www.theandros.com/defining.html> (28 Sept., 2007).

²⁶ Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents* (Boston, MA: St Paul Books & Media, 1992), 1.

²⁷ Joseph Woodill. *Needed Liturgical Reform Addressed at Fr. Schmemann Memorial Lecture. Jacob’s Well.*

communities, other than Orthodox or Catholic, are doing the same. Within the Canadian context, with which I am more familiar than the U.S., the Anglican Church of Canada published a report in 1993 on the evaluation of *The Book of Alternative Services* in which it addressed the question of liturgical dissatisfaction. The United Church of Canada has opted for a variety of alternative liturgical services to fulfill its needs.²⁸ Although writing within a Western perspective, Hans Küng notes that such liturgical changes, which began just before the Second Vatican Council, affected both Protestant and Orthodox Christians. He writes that “while we have been speaking almost entirely of Protestant demands, the demands of the Orthodox are in many respects the same.”²⁹ These examinations of rituals and beliefs suggest that the degree of variation within current Orthodox belief and theological interpretation warrants a study in the area of philosophy that underpins Orthodox belief and theology.

Often the degree of variation in contemporary belief and theological interpretation, within both Latin and Orthodox Churches, promotes a lack of uniform with a single institutional religious practice. To some extent this may be explained by Richard Tarnas’s observation. He identifies secular individualism and the decline of traditional religion as the overall problem in the West. But this decline is seen as not

<<http://jacwell.org/reviews/1997-WINTER-Calivas.htm>> (28 Sept., 2007). See also, Paul Tarazi, *An Orthodox Christian Response to the Inclusive Language Lectionary*. Orthodox Research Institute. <http://www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/bible/tarazi_inclusive_language_lectionary.htm> (28 Sept., 2007).

²⁸ M. Milne, “Adding New Items to Worship Menu,” *United Church Observer*, January 1994, 12.

²⁹ Hans Küng, *The Council and Reunion* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 275.

totally negative. New forms of social construction may occur.³⁰ Tarnas writes: “Although the ascendance of secular individualism and the decline of traditional religious belief may have precipitated widespread spiritual anomie, it is evident that, for many, these same developments ultimately encouraged new forms of religious orientation and a greater spiritual autonomy.” There is a positive result arising from the decline of traditional practice if the faithful develop a proper theological understanding upon which to base a new social construction. This new social construction will reflect the mind of the Church, that is, her Catholic consciousness. The new social construction will be a product of experience of the uncreated energies of God and not the product of speculative theology as is common in the West. However, I doubt that the general decline of religious belief and individualism, in themselves, account for the frustration experienced by those who are actively involved in a new social construction of their religious experience. Rather, I suggest that an inadequate and thus less helpful, philosophical understanding is at the root of this frustration. Leslie Dewart, when asked to write a more popular view of his challenging book, *The Foundations of Belief*, commented that though his book addresses a “religious” problem the change occurring in religious belief is the result of the evolution of humanity and its way of philosophical understanding.³¹ Thus, if he is correct, a new way of philosophical understanding is needed. Further, I agree with Patrick Sherry that secular individualism and the decline in traditional religion are symptoms of the Western

³⁰ Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding Ideas that have Shaped our World View* (New York: Ballantine, 1991), 403.

³¹ Leslie Dewart, *Religion, Language and Truth* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), 10.

crisis. They do not explain it.³² Because of our present inadequate philosophical understanding this less than helpful situation continues to frustrate both Eastern and Western theologians in their theological interpretations.

It is through their acceptance and their use by the believing community that religious texts have formulated and preserved dogma and doctrine.³³ Scholastic philosophical expression has become a constituent part of the western religious vocabulary.³⁴ A Renaissance interpretation which marks a transitional period between the medieval and the modern world, has failed to support the worldview presented by the modern way of thinking. In the language of a 1947 report to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Renaissance has “led the way to some of the tragedies of modern secularism and godlessness.”³⁵ Orthodoxy, though never dominated by scholastic philosophy, has not totally escaped the societal influence generated by the modern way of thinking and belief. Further, Orthodox belief, as influenced by modern thinking, seems to have abandoned many Orthodox religious traditions as antiquated and meaningless. In the United States, this modern way of thinking is often recognized as

³² Patrick Sherry, *Religion, Truth and Language-games* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 89.

³³ M. Burbach, “Liturgical Education in the Seminary,” in *Seminary Education in a Time of Change*, ed. J. Lee and L. Putz (Notre Dame: Fides, 1965), 429.

³⁴ P. F. Bradshaw, “Reckonings 7: The Reshaping of Liturgical Studies,” *Anglican Theological Review* 72, (1990): 481-487. See also, Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

³⁵ “Catholicity: A Study in the Conflict of Christian Traditions in the West.” Electronic Version © 2003 The Orthodox Anglican Communion. <<http://orthodoxanglican.net/downloads/catholicity.PDF>> (28 Sept., 2007).

“Americanization” and espouses the goal of an autocephalous American Orthodox Church. Timothy Ware observes:

This vision of an American autocephalous Church has its most ardent advocates in the OCA, which sees itself as the nucleus of such a Church, and among the Syrians. But there are others, especially among the Greeks, the Serbs, and the Russian Church in Exile, who view with reserve this emphasis upon American Orthodoxy. They are deeply conscious of the value of the Christian civilizations developed over many centuries by the Greek and Slavonic peoples, and they feel that it would be a disastrous impoverishment for the younger generation, if their Church were to sacrifice this great inheritance and to become completely “Americanized.”³⁶

Since phenomenological interpretation continues to introduce a new philosophical awareness into Western and Eastern religious belief we must continually review this awareness from the perspective of Latin and Orthodox believers.

Scholastic philosophy, because of its strict formalization, is the least adequate for contemporary Orthodox theological understanding. I illustrate this through a phenomenologically qualitative approach to certain theological issues. A phenomenologically qualitative approach, unlike a scholastic theoretical approach, presents new insights for theological interpretation. I suggest that the root of much contemporary frustration with theological understanding originates in one’s qualitative understanding, or awareness, which often fails to affirm inherited theological belief. One’s frustration is not with

³⁶ Timothy Ware. “Western Orthodoxy.” *The Orthodox Church - Church History* by Kallistos Ware.
<http://www.synaxis.org/sschool/Orthodox_Church.html#_Toc522264252> (28 Sept., 2007).

the social constructions themselves that have been created to express religious belief but with the philosophy that supports the theology of social construction. A qualitative understanding that affirms experiential insight is needed to remedy the present inadequacy of our inherited Hellenic philosophical understanding. With a focus on the social constructions of Orthodox Canon Law and the social constructions of an Orthodox understanding of ecology, I suggest that a phenomenologically qualitative approach, taking into account contemporary developments in existential philosophy, will reveal a more satisfactory theological understanding than scholastic philosophy.

Therefore, in this dissertation I adopt a phenomenological qualitative approach which I believe begins to overcome the limitations of scholastic philosophy. The limitations of scholastic philosophy have contributed to the frustration in interpreting contemporary experience. However, this dissertation also has its limitations which are not all overcome by a phenomenological qualitative approach. Unlike the scholastic approach, whose primary limitations attach to ideas that thinkers construct, the primary limitations of a phenomenological qualitative approach attach to the capacity to think as such. Qualitative limitations in the capacity to think are a part of the natural fallen human condition. As well, there are academic limitations to this dissertation. I cite three of them. The first is that I limit my attention to the subjects of ecological theology and canon law. However, the principles discussed with respect to these subjects may be properly applied, *inter alia*, to other theological subjects. Secondly, the discussion in the dissertation is in the English language which carries limits with respect to the accuracy of foreign language translation and nuances of meaning. Often such nuances of meaning are not

translatable. Thirdly, there are limits to the amount of data from theologians available for research. The internet has alleviated this problem somewhat by providing easy access to information previously available only via specialized theological or university libraries. Finally, given that ecology and the environment have only recently come to greater theological attention, in any serious manner, there is less written concerning ecological theology than canon law.

Motivated by personal interest I have undertaken this self-initiated theological investigation, as a social science, into the topics of Orthodox Canon Law and Ecology within Orthodox Theology. I have opted for this personal initiative in lieu of a corporate-sponsored research programme. Such personal motivation is legitimate for social science research according to J. Mouton and H. C. Marais.³⁷ It is to be borne in mind that a phenomenological qualitative interpretive enquiry is designed to investigate meaning, not form. It is not designed for an objective presentation of theory nor is it intended to define objective reality.³⁸ Changes in philosophical thought do not occur uniformly in contemporary Western society. There is often a mixture of ancient, modern and contemporary insight requiring some sorting out. This will become increasingly apparent as this investigation proceeds.

³⁷ J. Mouton and H. C. Marais, *Basic Concepts in the Methodology of the Social Sciences* (South Africa: Human Sciences Research Council, 1990), 34.

³⁸ R. J. Silvers, "A Silence within Phenomenology," *Interpretive Human Studies: An Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, ed. V. Darroch and R. J. Silvers (Washington: University of America Press, 1982), 17.

An Interpretive Phenomenology

Evidence from popular polls and academic presentations show that religious interpretation in North America is changing.³⁹ This change, already begun at the university level, is now taking place at the popular level. Allan Bloom notes this change in popular culture.

Gone is the cosmic intention of placing man in the universe. In the direction of the humanities, it is again only anthropology that has maintained a certain opening, particularly to the merchandise being hawked in comparative literature, but also to serious studies, e.g., Greek religion. No other social scientists expect to get much from nineteenth- and twentieth-century art and literature, which fascinated many significant social scientists a generation ago, and there are fewer and fewer social scientists who have much familiarity with that sort of thing in a personal way....Notably, the social science intellectual in the German or French mold, looked upon as a kind of sage or wise man who could tell all about life, has all but disappeared.⁴⁰

In the West religious interpretation in general is moving from a predominately objective point of view to a predominately subjective point of view. A report in the National Catholic Reporter (1992) summarizes the results of Gallup Poll: "The nation's Catholics are largely loyal to the faith as they perceive it, but increasingly at odds with institutional directives" [italics

³⁹ Thomas Ryba, *The Essence of Phenomenology and its Meaning for the Scientific Study of Religion*. (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), xiv.

⁴⁰ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 369.

mine]⁴¹ Although this phenomenon is observable in Latin and Orthodox theological interpretations which share a common societal context Thomas Hopko finds that this is a new experience for Orthodoxy.⁴² Since religious social construction carries the intended meaning and does not discover meaning, the problem is a qualitative, hence personal, one and not a theoretical or impersonal one. Further, what Richard Palmer says of written texts, such as canon law, may be said of a community's attitude to its social constructions such as ecological understanding.

Literary interpreters can learn from juridical and theological interpretation....In both, the objective is to let the text lead the understanding and open up the subject. The interpreter is not so much applying a method to the text as an observed object, but rather trying to adjust his own thinking to the text.⁴³

According to Leonard Hodgson philosophical issues precede theological ones and philosophical difficulties “face the secular philosopher equally with the Christian believer.”⁴⁴ David Platt also suggests that philosophical difficulties precede theological ones and once philosophical “difficulties are accepted and faced (and they are real difficulties for faith as well

⁴¹ T. Fox, “US Catholics Loyal, Choose Moral Terms,” *National Catholic Reporter*, 8 October 1992, p 8.

⁴² Thomas Hopko, Orthodoxy in Post-Modern Pluralistic Societies. St Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary Home Page, <<http://www.svots.edu>> (28 Sept., 2007).

⁴³ Richard Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 236.

⁴⁴ Leonard Hodgson, *The Place of Reason in Christian Apologetic* (New York: D Appleton, 1925), 57.

as for philosophy) we can go on to talk about various concepts of God.”⁴⁵

An interpretative phenomenology renders the interpretation of religious texts in canon law and ecology authentic and acceptable to contemporary Orthodox, as well as Catholic, theologians. A phenomenological authentication does not objectively specify religious truth but invites a meaningful understanding of truth on the part of the theologian. According to Thomas Merrill in theological interpretation the believer has an interpretive advantage over the non-believer by being “attuned to the functional intention of the [Christian] author.”⁴⁶ The concrete problem of meaningful interpretation of a text, or its context, is alleviated for the theologian through a qualitative approach to the intention of the author, or authors of a text, rather than through merely up-dating the language of a text. The way is then open to authenticating an understanding in harmony with one’s immediate experience which is not culturally Hellenic.

However, changing one’s interpretive perspective from theoretical to phenomenological does give rise to a degree of personal anxiety which may be a negative experience on the part of some believers. But such personal anxiety need not remain negative. According to a Dutch Protestant theologian, with experience in the missions, an affirming positive affect is possible. “[Theologians] address humankind on its yearnings, needs, and anxieties, knowing that we are not speaking the last

⁴⁵ David Platt, *Intimations of Divinity* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 209.

⁴⁶ Thomas Merrill, *Christian Criticism: A Study of Literary God-talk* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi N V, 1976), 18.

word, but convinced that we do offer something essential.”⁴⁷ With the intent of affirming something essential, I address the issues of a theologian’s interpretive phenomenology and personal anxiety

An Interpretive Phenomenology and Personal Anxiety

Theologians recognize that there is sometimes a negative correlation between an interpretive phenomenology and personal anxiety. Hans Küng is one theologian in particular who notes that a personal interpretive perspective can cripple people by the fear, ultimately rooted in unconscious insecurity, of having one’s own orthodoxy shaken by a reconsideration of it...by having insufficient intellectual energy to break out of one’s own theological scheme or system, constructed perhaps decades ago and defended ever since.⁴⁸

It must be noted that existential anxiety is most likely common to all belief systems but present in varying degrees. Paul Brunton, in writing *The Spiritual Crisis of Man: An Examination of the Concept and the Experience of God*, develops an integrated Christian and non-Christian understanding for modern times to counteract existential anxiety.⁴⁹ He suggests that humanity must work to restore the relationship with God, or human beings shall terminate through the self-destruction brought on by severe alienation from each

⁴⁷ D. J. Bosch, “The Nature of Theological Education,” *Theologia Evangelica* 25 (1992): 15.

⁴⁸ Hans Küng, *The Council and Reunion* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 171.

⁴⁹ Paul Brunton, *The Spiritual Crisis of Man: An Examination of the Concept and the Experience of God* (London: Rider, 1970).

other and the human spirit. An individual philosophically and culturally alienated from the dominant social context experiences a deep sense of personal anxiety. This personal anxiety is theologically significant. An experience of alienation, due to the dichotomy between theological understanding and experience, gives rise to varying degrees of existential uncertainty. However, there is a positive aspect to this existential uncertainty. Within an Eastern understanding, alienation, that is, failing to remain close to God, accords with Origen's thinking according to Edward Moore.

Origen understands one's "failure to assent" to God's will as positive in that history is then generated in which God can interact and instruct humanity. This position is contrary to the Stoics who required conformity to the predestined rational thought of Zeus who grants life to mortals."⁵⁰

Existential anxiety is characterized by the individual's inability to specify its source. It arises within the general context. By identifying existential anxiety as phenomenological anxiety I do not mean the anxiety that accompanies human finite existence. I mean that anxiety that results in the separation from the "infinite ground or foundation of our being" to use Paul Tillich's language.⁵¹ Scholastic thinking, not fitting well into the modern world, occasions theological anxiety in Latin and Orthodox theologians because it alienates the subject, that is, the believer, from its object, that is, foundational being. Since phenomenological interpretation actualizes its intended object

⁵⁰ Edward Moore, *Origen of Alexandria and St Maximus the Confessor: An Analysis and Critical Evaluation of their Eschatological Doctrines* (Boca Raton, FL: Dissertation.com, 2005), 55.

⁵¹ Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue* (New York: Harper, 1965), 3.

(foundational being), Daniel Guerrière cautions that further specification and clarification are needed before identifying foundational being with that which is divine, or God.⁵² It is to be noted that some Western philosophers, such as Leslie Dewart, hold that God is beyond the foundational being of social construction. He writes: "What I have suggested is that philosophy today must give itself a meta-metaphysical orientation. I have suggested that philosophy should transcend its metaphysical stage of development and, thus, initiate its meta-metaphysical age."⁵³

It appears that phenomenological anxiety may be overcome to a great degree through an intentional reconciliation among God, ourselves and all humanity. I say "intentional" which means to say that within the ontological relationship, phenomenologically conceived, humanity has never been separated from that which is divine. That is to say there never has been a separation on the level of being between God and ourselves. There has been only an epistemological distinction. God and humanity have been, are, and always will be ontologically composite of each other in a manner of degree, not in kind. This philosophical understanding is in accord with the notion of divinization which is the goal of the Orthodox spiritual life. As a result, the relationship between God and ourselves is made apparent (disclosed) in varying degrees of intensity which often gives rise, however, to the appearance of separation. At one interpretive extreme is the total identification of the believer with that which is divine and, at the other interpretive extreme is a total separation of the believer from that which is divine. Either

⁵² Daniel Guerrière, "Outline of a Phenomenology of the Religious," *Research in Phenomenology* 4 (1974): 119.

⁵³ Leslie Dewart, *The Foundations of Belief* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), 19.

extreme constitutes an inauthentic understanding which is corrected within Orthodox theological understanding of the personal relationships patterned on the circumintercession of the Trinity. A phenomenological qualitative approach discloses a similar existential relationship constructed upon the abiding unity of the theologian and that which is foundational, that is, the divine nature. In short, God intends us and we intend God.

Dermot Lane's observation that outdated philosophical and cultural influences have "an alienating effect on the present generation of Christian believers" is given substance by those ecclesiastical and ecclesial social constructions which do not induce feelings of peace, purpose, or union due to an outdated understanding.⁵⁴ Those theological social constructions which evoke a feeling of frustration and discord produce further feelings of anxiety and separation. Since personal theological anxiety first arises at a philosophical level, I suggest that such anxiety may be resolved, within Orthodoxy, by relying on an appropriate phenomenological qualitative interpretive perspective, rather than on the inherited scholastic philosophical perspective of the West. Thomas Hopko, if I have understood him correctly, takes the argument further on a positive note and suggests that anxiety could result in a re-creation of reality. He writes that "traditional language, structures, symbols and rites are recreated to the point where their original content and meaning no longer remain at all, but are replaced by a whole new reconstruction of reality."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Dermot Lane, *The Experience of God: An Invitation to do Theology* (Dublin: Veritas, 1989), 69.

⁵⁵ Thomas Hopko, *Orthodoxy in Post-Modern Pluralistic Societies*. St Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary Home Page, <<http://www.svots.edu>> (28 Sept., 2007).

Frederick Streng notes that phenomenological theology has tried “to avoid any procedures for understanding that derive from ‘positivist’ or ‘rationalist’ presuppositions, on the grounds that [they do] not allow the *religious* meaning of the data to become known” [Streng’s italics].⁵⁶ A theologian’s interpretive perspective discloses meaning derived from an understanding of the divine presence in the world. It does not merely describe the divine presence in the world. Further, the intimations of a divine presence within our experience as theologians give rise to certain expectations of encountering that presence on the part of all believers.

According to Avery Dulles the phenomenological method of interpretation relies not on scholastic categories but, on ‘clues’, in Michael Polanyi’s sense of the term, that are capable of new meanings.⁵⁷ The type of theological interpretation crafted by the phenomenological approach to interpretation is existential theology. Charles Möeller further suggests that the phenomenological approach is to be preferred to traditional philosophical theory.⁵⁸ As a methodology, phenomenological interpretation is capable of transcending cultures, since it is not bound to the categories of a specific cultural experience. An

⁵⁶ Frederick Streng, “Purposes and Investigative Principles in the Phenomenology of Religion: A Reconstruction,” *Journal for the Study of Religion* 4 (1991): 4.

⁵⁷ Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 30.

⁵⁸ Möeller distinguishes between the terms “existential” and “existentialist.” He writes: “The primary cultural datum with which to begin reflection on Christian anthropology is that of the existential approach [Möeller’s emphasis]. We do not say ‘existentialist,’ for this term denotes a region of philosophical systematization, whereas what we are here concerned with is a global approach to reality.” Charles Möeller, “Renewal of the Doctrine of Man,” in *Renewal of Religious Structures*, ed. L. K. Shook (Montréal: Palm, 1968), 424.

example of phenomenological interpretation or existential theology as transcending cultures is given by Wilhelm Jordaan and Jackie Jordaan who cite Søren Kierkegaard's work.⁵⁹ Emil Brunner has explained that

it was as a Christian philosopher that Kierkegaard created the "Existential" philosophy, it was as a Christian thinker that Ebner discovered the theme of 'I-Thou' - no Greek, however great a genius, would have ever understood such a theme - it was as a Biblical thinker that Martin Buber recognized the significance of the contrasts between 'I' and 'It,' 'I' and 'Thou'.⁶⁰

Given that the context of a believer's interpretive perspective is the Lebenswelt, that is to say, the conscious life-world, an appropriate phenomenological interpretive perspective alleviates personal anxiety in the Orthodox theologian.

A Phenomenological Interpretive Perspective within Orthodox Theology

A Rationale for a Phenomenological Interpretive Perspective within Orthodox Theology

Phenomenological philosophical thinking is being rediscovered in the western world and being applied within a philosophical theology.⁶¹ As rediscovery leads to tension in theological interpretation between empirical thinking, which

⁵⁹ Wilhelm Jordaan and Jackie Jordaan, *Man in Context* (Johannesburg: Lexicon, 1989), 822.

⁶⁰ Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt: A Christian Anthropology* (London: Lutterworth, 1942), 546.

⁶¹ Dale Schlitt, *Experience and Spirit: A Post-Hegelian Philosophical Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

stresses facts, and phenomenological thinking which stresses values.⁶² In this section I present a rationale for a phenomenological enquiry based upon two hypotheses: one, that phenomenological interpretive perspective is new to contemporary Western thought; whereas, it is likely to be recognized as not so new within Eastern thought and; two, that the phenomenon of social construction reflects how theological existential interpretation is actualized in the development of Orthodox theology. About the development of Orthodox theology John Behr has written:

Rather than the dry, scholastic exposition of formal dogmatic truths, characteristic of Orthodoxy in the previous couple of centuries, this nascent theological consciousness expressed itself in a new style, with concerns held to be more immediate and spiritual, more ‘existential’ – again echoing broader developments in the West.⁶³

This dissertation is a theological enquiry undertaken within as an act within the faith of Orthodoxy. That is to say it is not a report on religious studies. As well, this thesis is being researched with an intent to relevant reform in philosophical thinking. Therefore, I take seriously the role of the theologian who shares in the critical approaches to reform in theological understanding. The attempt at evaluating new and critical philosophical approaches in light of contemporary understanding is a worthwhile cause. From such research individuals and

⁶² Bernard Lonergan, *Doctrinal Pluralism* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1971), 4.

⁶³ John Behr, “Faithfulness and Creativity,” in *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West*, eds. John Behr, Andrew Louth, and Dimitri Conomos (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 159.

believing communities can both benefit. In this dissertation, I propose the new and critical approach of a phenomenological interpretive perspective and, on the whole, abandon a traditional theoretical methodology. As the argument proceeds, however, there will be some overlapping of the two methodologies though a phenomenological methodology dominates.⁶⁴ It is to be noted, as well, that Thomas Ryba acknowledges an overlap of methodologies when he recognizes phenomenology as a science addressing the “new propositions about the conscious constitution of the world,” and, as well, as a philosophy of science when it addresses “a style of thought, an intellectual way of being, or a love of wisdom.”⁶⁵ Robert Neville also recognizes an overlap and makes a strong argument to preserve the “theological necessity of speculative thought” and “the religious necessity of empirical theology.”⁶⁶

The phenomenological approach is, strictly speaking, neither purely theoretical nor purely theoretical but it is a conscious interpretive combination of reasonable thinking and experience. The phenomenological approach is similar to, but not identical with, an earlier method of interpretation, that is, the pre-scientific method. In his ‘Vienna Lecture’ Edmund Husserl describes how humankind left its primal (and phenomenal) unitary state which was practical and useful for pre-scientific understanding. Interpretation of experience in this unitary state was “meant to serve man in his human purposes so that he may

⁶⁴ J. Mouton and H. C. Marais, *Basic Concepts in the Methodology of the Social Sciences* (South Africa: Human Sciences Research Council, 1990), 12.

⁶⁵ Thomas Ryba, *The Essence of Phenomenology and its Meaning for the Scientific Study of Religion*. (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 202.

⁶⁶ Robert Neville, *Behind the Masks of God: An Essay Toward Comparative Theology* (Albany, New York, 1973), 236.

order his worldly life in the happiest possible way and shield it from disease, from every sort of evil fate, from disaster and death.”⁶⁷ Many Western theologians have abandoned this pre-scientific understanding by becoming philosophers concerned with the pure *theoria* (theory). This is the situation that Orthodox theologians face as well given that they live within a Western culture.

As mentioned above, this is a work in interpretive theology (an enquiry) and not a theoretical study of religion as a set of norms. One philosopher has written that “[theology] is often confused with the term ‘religion’ but should not be, for theology is not a type of valuing but a type of inquiry.”⁶⁸ Yet, we are stuck with this distinction which may remain for some time between theology and religious studies. The earlier schools of theology, which came into being before the global multifaith encounter among world religions, had already defined the word ‘theology’ from a Judeo-Christian perspective. Thus, theology has been identified with committed Judeo-Christian enquiry, whereas, ‘religion’ has been identified with uncommitted study. With respect to religious studies Colin Morris writes: “The religions of the Jordan are part of [Western] heritage whereas those of the Ganges are not,” in showing how various religious attitudes have developed.⁶⁹ In this dissertation I am not engaging

⁶⁷ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 284.

⁶⁸ K. E. Peters, “The Concept of God and the Method of Science: An Exploration of the Possibility of Scientific Theology” (Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1971), 6.

⁶⁹ Colin Morris, *Start Your Own Religion* (London: BBC Books, 1992), viii.

in empirical theology.⁷⁰ Rather, I am engaging in phenomenological theology. Although indebted to empirical theology, phenomenological theology is prior to empirical theology, as noted above. Neither is this a work in traditional speculative theology, “in which the thinker begins with revealed or defined doctrine and arranges his materials in an order of descent from God to creatures and from existence to substances, then to powers and activities.”⁷¹ This dissertation in phenomenological theology aims to enquire into propositions about the meaning of religious experience and advance beyond the theoretical understandings currently accepted. An advantage of the phenomenological approach, given our contemporary concern with individuality, is its potential for the self-revelation of the interpreter. As we interpret the interpretations of others “we find something analogous in our own moment” of individual existence.⁷² This suggests that the individual does not live as an isolated entity but lives as an individual in community. John Macmurray has consciously set out to prove this point in his book, *The Self as Agent*. He writes: “Against the assumption that the Self is an isolated individual, I have set the view that the Self is a *person*, and that personal existence is *constituted* by the relation of persons” [Macmurray’s italics].⁷³

⁷⁰ For a discussion on empirical theology see H. Pietrse, “The Empirical Approach in Practical Theology: A Discussion with J. A. van der Ven,” *Religion and Theology* 1 (1994): 77-83.

⁷¹ *A Dictionary of Scholastic Philosophy*, 1966, s.v. “scholastic method: theological method,” by Bernard Wuellner.

⁷² D. G. Marshall, “Literary Interpretation,” in *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed. J. Gibaldi (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1994), 159-182. . See also, J. N. Vorster, “Creatures Creating Creators: The Potential of Rhetoric,” *Religion & Theology/Religie & Teologie* 1, (1994): 118-135.

⁷³ John Macmurray, *The Self as Agent* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), 12.

An earlier study has shown that theology has an interpretive mandate “based on active participation (praxis) in the mission of the ecclesiological community.”⁷⁴ Vincent Brümmer correctly notes that one of the difficulties in doing theology is that the theologian is required to master the basic tools of other disciplines.⁷⁵ Phenomenology, as a tool to be mastered, is a philosophical method of interpretation acceptable to ecumenical theological enquiry, that is, equally applicable to Eastern and Western traditions of the Church. While it is correct that philosophical theories and tools of the social sciences are to be mastered within theological enquiry, they are not to replace theological enquiry. Such replacement impoverishes theology according to Metropolitan Hierotheosis of Nafpaktos. He writes in an article, ‘Secularism in the Church, Theology and Pastoral Care,’ that:

when theology is not a part of this framework, as presented by all the Holy Fathers, then it is not orthodox but secular. This secular theology is encountered in the West, for there they analyze and interpret the Holy Scripture through their own human and impure intellect, outside the correct prerequisites presented by the Holy Fathers. Unfortunately, in some cases this has affected our own place, too.⁷⁶

Howland Sanks notes that theological studies in North American seminaries have been “replaced by training in a series of

⁷⁴ F. L. Shults, “An Open Systems Model for Adult Learning in Theological Inquiry” (Ph.D. thesis, Walden University, 1991).

⁷⁵ Vincent Brümmer, *Theology and Philosophical Inquiry: An Introduction* (London: Macmillan, 1981), ix.

⁷⁶ “Secularism in the Church, Theology and Pastoral Care,” <http://www.vic.com/~tscon/pelagia/htm/ar01.en.secularism_in_church.htm> (28 Sept.,2007).

particular skills needed for the tasks to be performed by the leaders in Christian communities.”⁷⁷ Earlier, Martin Marty had observed the same tendency to move away from theological inquiry and writes: “Meanwhile, the theologians have moved increasingly into the secular academy, where they cannot use a church or even the church as an automatic reference group.”⁷⁸ To counter such an impoverishment, it has been suggested by one theological educator to integrate the three areas of *theoria*, *poiesis* and *praxis*.⁷⁹ This may be done within a future social construction of belief.

John Macquarrie states that there is no one dominant philosophy today in the West.⁸⁰ It must be remembered that the phenomenological interpretive perspective presents itself as only one of a number of methods of interpretation and does not present itself as a philosophical system. After relating his own efforts at phenomenological thinking, William Luijpen writes: “It should be clear...that we do not wish to recommend phenomenology as the ‘ultimate’ philosophy.”⁸¹ This advice is given because “we should not expect a single epistemology that can equally well subsume sense experience and extrasensory experience...mystical experience and practical

⁷⁷ Howland Sanks, “Education for Ministry since Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 45 (1984): 498.

⁷⁸ Martin Marty, “North America: The Empirical Understanding of Religion and Theology,” in *What is Religion? An Inquiry for Christian Theology*, (1980):46-51, (Concilium 136).

⁷⁹ D. J. Bosch, “The Nature of Theological Education,” *Theologia Evangelica* 25, (1992): 8-23.

⁸⁰ John Macquarrie, *Thinking about God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 96.

⁸¹ William Luijpen, *Phenomenology and Humanism: A Primer in Existential Phenomenology* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1966), 154.

planning...deterministic systems and normative systems.”⁸² According to one phenomenological philosopher “all that [phenomenology] can attempt is a clarification of the essential structure of experience....Hence phenomenology can supply us with a metaphysical knowledge about this one part of the universe.”⁸³ As well, another investigator concludes that a phenomenological approach to religion should mean “no religious or philosophical view can serve systematically as the evaluative criterion of authenticity for a specific expression of religion.”⁸⁴ Correctly, Murray Turoff warns that “there is no one ‘best’ or even ‘unique’ philosophical basis which underlies any scientific procedure or theory.”⁸⁵ I suggest that all the above views are consonant with Orthodox theological thinking. Further, given phenomenology’s immense complexity and possibly inexhaustible range of subject matter, no one group of phenomenologists enjoys a monopoly in phenomenological interpretation.⁸⁶ We experience this diversity of phenomenological interpretation within an existential context, not a theoretical one. The phenomenological method is the one I have chosen in this dissertation because it gives priority to the

⁸² A. Wilson, “Systems Epistemology,” in *The World System: Models, Norms, Applications*, ed. E. Laszlo (New York: George Braziller, 1973), 125.

⁸³ Herbert Spiegelberg, “Toward a Phenomenology of Experience,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (1964): 331.

⁸⁴ Frederick Streng, “Purposes and Investigative Principles in the Phenomenology of Religion: A Reconstruction,” *Journal for the Study of Religion* 4 (1991): 9.

⁸⁵ Murray Turoff, “The Delphi Policy,” in *The Delphi Method: Techniques and Applications*, eds. M. Turoff and H. Linstone (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 17.

⁸⁶ Helmut Wagner, *Phenomenology of Consciousness and Sociology of the Life-world: An Introductory Study* (Calgary, AB: University of Alberta, 1983), 49.

person and because it incorporates recent developments in contemporary western thought that are also proper to Orthodox theological thought. Yet, Gordon Kaufman warns that “the intrinsic anthropomorphism of this [personal] perspective thus makes it at once suspect and seductive.”⁸⁷

Something greater than mere adaptive change occurs in the person who adopts the phenomenological interpretive approach. An essential change occurs in the person. There is a restructuring of perception. Innovations are introduced into the perception of experience, altering the subject, as well as the perceived object. In a phenomenological interpretive perspective the object of perception is not the independent Platonic ideal of scholastic understanding. Rather, the object of phenomenological perception is an eidetic object, or web of meanings.⁸⁸ Unlike a Platonic object, an eidetic object is a consciously formed (abstracted) object with no independent existence of its own. An eidetic object, or an object of the mind, arises from participating in existence as dependent upon the subject’s awareness and intent.⁸⁹ In short, the eidetic object is the product of a conscious relationship. The eidetic reduction is the method of rendering experience as susceptible of universal understanding. This understanding is not something other, that is, objective, but rather is the disclosure of the logical structure of phenomena, apparent to one’s mind or understanding, that constitutes the

⁸⁷ Gordon Kaufman, “On the Meaning of ‘God’: Transcendence without Mythology,” in *New Theology* 4, ed. M. Marty and D. Peerman (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 89.

⁸⁸ J. K. Smith, “Hermeneutics and Qualitative Inquiry,” in *Theory and Concepts in Qualitative Research*, eds. D. J. Flinders and G. E. Mills (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993), 183.

⁸⁹ Thomas Ryba, *The Essence of Phenomenology and its Meaning for the Scientific Study of Religion*. (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 210.

phenomena. Hence, as the subject's awareness changes, the eidetic object of consciousness changes. This understanding has profound implications for the Orthodox theologian when it comes to discussing the divine-human reality of the church as an historical and socially constructed reality.

The phenomenological interpretive perspective places emphasis on dynamic intersubjectivity. A religious phenomenological interpretive perspective has the potential to bring about a spiritual self-transformation.⁹⁰ Others understand rhetoric to play a role in this personal transformation.⁹¹ The exchange of notions between, or among persons, transforms these same persons. Religious transformation, however, is not identical to the notion of *metánoia*. *Metánoia* means a conversion to another's way of thinking and acting, "an utter interior reorientation," which must be willfully sustained.⁹² *Metánoia*, as spiritual self-transformation, is not an accommodation to the will of another but an adjustment in the relational unity with another. For spiritual growth to occur constant adjustment is required in this relational unity. This constant adjustment results in a new social construction of the theologian's experience.

Psychologists Henryk Misiak and Virginia Sexton understand phenomenology as a movement with a common psychological core as well as a movement with a variety of expression.⁹³ From a phenomenological point of view the common psychological core replaces the objective being of

⁹⁰ S. B. King, "Concepts, Anti-concepts and Religious Experience," *Religious Studies* 14 (1978): 452.

⁹¹ J. N. Vorster, "Creatures Creating Creators: The Potential of Rhetoric," *Religion & Theology/Religie & Teologie* 1, (1994): 125.

⁹² Bernanrd Häring, *The Law of Christ* (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1963), 209/409.

⁹³ Henryk Misiak and Virginia Sexton, *History of Psychology: An Overview* (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1966), 406.

scholastic philosophy (an ontological idealism), in which objects exist independently of consciousness, with a contemporary world of subjective construction, (the *eidōs* of phenomenology), which depends on consciousness.⁹⁴ This consciousness constitutes the human being and opens up new horizons for interpretation. Further, explaining Husserl, Robert Magliola writes: “Consciousness is wrongly considered a *faculty* for being conscious instead of an *act* of being conscious” [Magliola’s italics].⁹⁵ Distinguishing scholastic ontological understanding from phenomenological ontological understanding John Heritage writes that

the phenomenologist makes a strong distinction between, on the one hand, a sensory presentation and, on the other, an intended object constituted of the sensory presentation. From a phenomenological perspective, all objects of consciousness whether referred to the real world...or to one or another ideal world...exist as the products of constitutive acts of consciousness. As such they stand as unities of meaning which are established in their moments of recognition.⁹⁶

In phenomenology, the term “constitutes” can be used in various senses. I follow Herbert Spiegelberg’s explanation of Husserl’s use of the term meaning that “each object of

⁹⁴ Misiak and Sexton explain that “the word eidetic comes from *eidōs*, meaning essence, borrowed by Husserl from Plato....This procedure of getting to the essences themselves, Husserl called eidetic reduction.” Henryk Misiak and Virginia Sexton, *History of Psychology: An Overview* (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1966), 409.

⁹⁵ Robert Magliola, “Like the Glaze on a Katydid-wing: Phenomenological Criticism,” in *Contemporary Literary Theory* eds. D. G. Atkins and L. Morrow (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 1989), 103.

⁹⁶ John Heritage, *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1984), 42.

experience establishes itself, or ‘settles’ in our experience by taking shape before our eyes, as it were.”⁹⁷ This brief discussion has provided a rationale for the phenomenological interpretive perspective within Orthodox belief that I undertake in this dissertation.

A Phenomenological Interpretive Perspective is Proper to Orthodox Theology

Existential theology, which incorporates a phenomenological interpretive perspective, differs essentially from scholastic theology in that existential theology interprets the eidetic (mental) objects of consciousness, whereas scholastic theology interprets the theoretical objects of the intellect. Within scholasticism, theoretical theological questions and answers are governed within a fixed idea of nature. In this context a notion of contingency being anything but accidental is impossible to conceive.⁹⁸ Moreover, truth expressed in theoretical terms becomes fixed in a particular form of expression that itself is perceived to be as valid as the truth. This “fixed expression” of truth is still a problem for scholastic theologians but as Edward Moore notes such a problem as “fixed expression” did not exist for the immediate successors of Plato. He notes “the fact that Speusippus, the first Platonic successor...engaged in an explication of metaphysical concepts indicates that there was no uncontested doctrine – and certainly no dogma – bequeathed by

⁹⁷ Herbert Spiegelberg, “Toward a Phenomenology of Experience,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (1964): 328.

⁹⁸ Thomas Torrance, *Theological Science* (London: Oxford University, 1969), 61.

Plato....”⁹⁹ The problem arose later and a Dutch theologian notes the problem in traditional South African Afrikaner theological thinking which is formed by an interplay of Afrikaner culture and Reformed theology.¹⁰⁰ As well, Ernest Keen cites the same problematic of a fixed expression occurring in psychology.¹⁰¹ Such developments are being resisted within Orthodox theology.

Frank Gavin distinguishes between development and evolution and discusses the relationship between philosophy and Orthodox theology which led to a new way of thinking. He maintains that there is a fundamental difference between theology and philosophy.

Philosophy has changed, abrogated, altered, and discarded its systems. In each such case there was an evolution, not a development – a creation of a fundamentally and essentially different type, resting on a different premises and developing different conclusions. In Christian thought, on the contrary, there was undoubtedly a development, but no evolution, in the sense of the emergence of an essentially different type [of thought]. While a given philosophical system rests on the dogmas of its founder, it is destroyed when their authority is questioned and denied. The data of Christian theology are the content of the teaching of its Founder, the Incarnate God, and His authority is always accepted and affirmed. Consequently the *development* of Christian theology is a

⁹⁹ Edward Moore, *Plato* (Tirril, Penrith, UK: Humanities-Ebooks.co.uk, 2007), 40.

¹⁰⁰ H. Pietrse, “The Empirical Approach in Practical Theology: A Discussion with J A van der Ven,” *Religion and Theology* 1 (1994): 63.

¹⁰¹ Ernest Keen, *Three Faces of Being: Toward an Existential Clinical Psychology* (New York: Appleton-Century- Crofts, 1970), 352.

fact, while the *evolution* of its content is an impossibility, for it remains to same [Gavin's italics].¹⁰²

In existential theology, which incorporates a phenomenological perspective, a relational and dynamic conception of truth replaces a fixed idea of truth. Thus, fixity of expression is not a problem in existential interpretation since concepts have no independent existence that can become fixed in their expression. Existentialist thought, being an alternative to classical thought, has not developed *sui generis* (out of itself) in a void without terms of reference. History shows us that philosophical schools of thought are related and do not come into being independently of each other. Rather, they constitute frames of reference for each other. Exploring an existential understanding, Leslie Dewart, a Western philosopher, writes that "it would hardly make sense to say that the relationship of the mind to its objects was irrelevant to the truth of experience, or that experience might be true regardless of whether it took into account what reality was."¹⁰³ He is able to make this claim because in existential interpretation existence is understood as dynamic being, unity is understood as relational and, necessity is replaced by option.

Within the Western context the scientific way of knowing is the present fashionable way of knowing. However, an alternative, the phenomenological way of knowing, is available to Western philosophers, both Orthodox and Latin. The phenomenological methodology of existential interpretation presents a new type of scientific and qualitative way of knowing

¹⁰² Frank Gavin, *Some Aspects of Contemporary Greek Orthodox Thought* (Milwaukee, WI: Moorehouse Publishing, 1923), 32.

¹⁰³ Leslie Dewart, *Evolution and Consciousness: The Role of Speech in the Origin and Development of Human Nature* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1989), 153.

which incorporates analytical thinking. Like scholastic interpretation, existential interpretation, is aware of its own understanding of being that transcends the physical. In this understanding phenomenological thinking does not construct a scholastic metaphysics but rather constructs social eidetic objects which have no extra-mental existence.¹⁰⁴ Phenomenologically-minded philosophers reject any scientific way of knowing which claims to duplicate the nature of things. "The so-called 'laws of nature' should not be seen as ontological entities, but are ways of representing the observed - they are not nature as such."¹⁰⁵ In phenomenology eidetic objects are recognized as data which refer to phenomena and consciousness.¹⁰⁶ At this point the Orthodox theologian should be able to recognize the significance of these statements with respect to interpretation of the sacred mysteries of the Church and their subsequent social construction.

A phenomenological interpretive perspective arises out of immediate reflection on experience, not reflection on pre-existing theoretical formulae. The phenomenological interpretive perspective is not determined by pre-existing theoretical causes. Further, in phenomenological interpretation there is no past or future that concretely exists. There is only the perpetual present moment of existence which is susceptible to interpretation. Past events, which are memories, are recalled to the present moment, and hypothetical conceptions of the future, which are models, are yet to be actualized. Robert Sokolowski suggests:

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Ryba, *The Essence of Phenomenology and its Meaning for the Scientific Study of Religion*. (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 182.

¹⁰⁵ J. N. Vorster, "Creatures Creating Creators: The Potential of Rhetoric," *Religion & Theology/Religie & Teologie* 1, (1994): 121.

¹⁰⁶ Helmut Wagner, *Phenomenology of Consciousness and Sociology of the Life-world: An Introductory Study* (Calgary, AB: University of Alberta, 1983), 46.

The re-presenting and reliving of a past act should not be confused with reflection on the act. In a reflection we thematize an act that we are still living through; remembering does not thematize a past act, but revivifies it and goes through it again – at a distance, with a sense of its otherness to the present process of remembering.¹⁰⁷

The phenomenological interpretive perspective remains open to the future, while revealing the needs of the present age, and understands the preservation of any former conceptualizations not to be necessary. Remaining open to the future does not mean being free from direction. Being open to the future is possible for persons or communities who know who they are in the present moment of their existence. In Edmund Husserl's words: "Perception is related only to the *present*. But this present is always meant as having an endless *past* behind it and an open *future* before it" [Husserl's italics].¹⁰⁸ Poetry, it seems to me, presents itself in a similar manner. According to one researcher the believer does not "hang on to old ideas out of fear that they are irreplaceable but instead seeks to improve them or replace them with better ideas."¹⁰⁹

The phenomenological interpretive perspective arises out of present experience and discloses new scientific understanding without prejudice to scholastic understanding. This is to say that earlier forms of thought have had their influence in the evolutionary development of

¹⁰⁷ Robert Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations: How Words Present Things*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1974), 148.

¹⁰⁸ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1970), 160.

¹⁰⁹ K. E. Peters, "The Concept of God and the Method of Science: An Exploration of the Possibility of Scientific Theology" (Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1971), 84.

phenomenological enquiry. Phenomenological enquiry has evolved out of a traditional investigative methodology preserving what is of value from the past while introducing something new in the present. In this sense the present is not divorced from the past but rather has evolved from it.¹¹⁰ Allan Bloom cites the evolutionary development of the thought of René Descartes who had a whole world of old beliefs, of pre-scientific experience and understanding of the order of things before he began his systematic doubt. He notes that Heidegger returned to pre-existing thought forms in developing his ideas.

But it was Heidegger, practically alone, for whom the study of Greek philosophy became truly central, a pressing concern for his meditation on being....A new beginning was imperative, and he turned with open mind to the ancients. But he did not focus on Plato or Aristotle....Heidegger was drawn instead to the pre-Socratic philosophers, from whom he hoped to discover another understanding of being to help him replace the exhausted one inherited from Plato and Aristotle, which he and Nietzsche thought to be at the root of both Christianity and modern science.”¹¹¹

Leslie Dewart notes a similar evolutionary development occurring in epistemological thinking. He writes: “The phenomenological method...*is not the diametric opposite* of the ontological; it is a more comprehensive one than the latter, whose merits it preserves and whose inadequacies it tries to

¹¹⁰ Robert Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations: How Words Present Things*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1974), 167.

¹¹¹ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 310.

remedy” [*Italics mine*].¹¹² This evolutionary pattern, from old to new, continues as existential thinkers incorporate analytic components into their phenomenological interpretive perspectives. This blending of the analytical with the intuitive in the phenomenological approach constitutes a new approach to the scientific method of enquiry and social construction. Further, this new approach is proper to an Orthodox theological understanding.

Three Phenomenological Social Constructions and Their Interpretive Perspectives

Social Construction One: Participatory Language, not Descriptive Language

During the Renaissance theological thinking in the West was dominated by intellectually minded clerics who thought in theoretical terms. David Martin suggests that monasteries were the *loci* for such theoretical thinking and that monks who were “careful scholars” attracted many people who believed that “knowledge was to be sought after in monasteries.”¹¹³ Betty Knott however, understands the development of theological thought to have taken place within all sectors of society during the Renaissance. At this time there was a revival of the devotional spirit not only in the monasteries, but among those members of the Church who spent their lives in the world, among clergy and lay-people, among educated and

¹¹² Leslie Dewart, *Evolution and Consciousness: The Role of Speech in the Origin and Development of Human Nature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 31.

¹¹³ David Martin, *Tracts against the Times* (Guildford, UK: Lutterworth, 1973), 24.

uneducated.¹¹⁴ But, ultimately, in the West the clericalization of theology dominated with an over-emphasis on the ecclesiastical perspective in the interpretation of scholastic thought. A priestly theology had developed in the West whereas this was not the case for theological developments in the East. Thus, theological interpretation in the West focused on abstract and descriptive theological concepts rather than on the existential interpretation the life-world, which, it may be argued, characterized the East. In short, Western theology succumbed to the clericalism to which it was exposed.¹¹⁵ This clericalism in theology has had negative effects within Western Christendom and threatens Orthodoxy today. Particularly through its missionary activity western Christendom imposed a foreign view on many cultures in spreading the gospel. Often indigenous cultures received the western gospel as a legacy of colonialism. The Institute of Contextual Theology notes that European theology was developed in foreign settings “such as the monastery or the world of academics in seminaries or universities or in ecclesiastical and clerical circles or in the context of Western culture and liberal capitalism and almost always in the context of middle class comfort and complacency.”¹¹⁶

Existential theologians pay attention to language as a personal, but not private, participatory meaning system. Language, as a meaning system, is to be understood without prejudice to language as a sign system. Eugene Fontinell states that our linguistic “concepts are participational rather than

¹¹⁴ Betty Knott, *The Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis* (London: Collins, 1963), 11.

¹¹⁵ D. J. Bosch, “The Nature of Theological Education,” *Theologia Evangelica* 25 (1992), 12.

¹¹⁶ Institute for Contextual Theology. *Ten Years of Theology and Struggle 1981-1991* (Braamfontein: ICT, 1992), 22.

representational.”¹¹⁷ Richard Tarnas traces this participatory dimension as having its beginning with Kant and developed with Goethe, Schiller, Schelling, and Hegel. He notes that “each of these thinkers gave his own distinct emphasis to the developing perspective, but common to all was a fundamental conviction that the relation of the human mind to the world was ultimately not dualistic but participatory.”¹¹⁸ Along with another theologian I hold the view that “theological language is convictional language of a special type” but not necessarily a confessional language.¹¹⁹ I suggest further that religious convictional language is unique due to its participatory, not merely descriptive character. Earlier, Paul Tillich articulated the same thought.¹²⁰ Further, religious language defies conventional semantics, according to Carl Raschke and is “self-consciously revelatory.”¹²¹ Some theologians understand that theological language is to function as explanatory since theology is a technical discipline, its “technical language,...an outgrowth of ordinary language,...must be accepted...in an explanatory context...to achieve a more developed understanding of reality.”¹²² By “explanatory,” MacKinnon does not mean “representational” in the sense of

¹¹⁷ Eugene Fontinell, “The Need for Radicalism,” in *The Future of Belief Debate*, ed. Gregory Baum (New York: Herder & Herder, 1967), 113.

¹¹⁸ Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding Ideas that have Shaped Our World View* (New York: Ballantine, 1991), 433.

¹¹⁹ W. F. Zuurdeeg, “The Nature of Theological Language,” *Journal of Religion* 40 (1960): 1-8 [Zuurdeeg’s italics].

¹²⁰ Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue* (New York: Harper, 1965), 2.

¹²¹ Carl Raschke, *The Alchemy of the Word: Language and the End of Theology* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1979), 57.

¹²² E. MacKinnon, “The Truth of Belief,” *America* 116 (1967): 555.

duplicating reality, but rather, means “representational” as actualized in a personal context. In short, he speaks of a conscious personal participation in the interpretation of the lifeworld. In discussing literary God-talk, Thomas Merrill states that “God-talk is nothing without audience participation, and to assure participation it leaves its canvases incomplete.”¹²³ I suggest that among these “canvases” is theological social construction. The canvas of theological social construction is left incomplete to assure our participation. Wolfgang Iser speaks of the “authortext-reader relationship” not as representational but “as material from which something new is fashioned.”¹²⁴ I suggest the same is true of an “author-social construction-actor” relationship. To fashion something new requires the active participation of a subject (person) with an object (another person or a thing) in the unity of a dialectical relationship. A personal conscious structuring of the life-world, or, which is the same thing, the social construction of the life-world, is accomplished through experience, not inherited from tradition.

In identifying the field of participational theology, Hans Küng writes: “What is at stake here is our everyday, common, human, ambiguous experiences not, as in earlier theology, the elitist experiences of intellectual clerics.”¹²⁵ Gregory Baum says. “Many Christians of our day desire to speak about the reality in which they believe in a language and in terms that are in continuity with ordinary experiences of life.”¹²⁶ Yet, most people

¹²³ Thomas Merrill, *Christian Criticism: A Study of Literary God-talk* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi N V, 1976), 15.

¹²⁴ Wolfgang Iser, *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1989), 249.

¹²⁵ Hans Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 116 [Küng’s italics].

¹²⁶ Gregory Baum, “Orthodoxy Recast,” in *The Future of Belief Debate*, ed. Gregory Baum (New York: Herder & Herder, 1967), 7.

do not use religious a language which reflects contemporary life experience when contemplating a social construction. As reported in M. Coxhead: “If they do not use traditional religious language, most people are struck dumb when they try to describe the meaning of their experience.”¹²⁷ One researcher has maintained that the old models of social construction are still used in religious understanding.¹²⁸ The choice of theological language determines the socially constructed meaning of an individual and collective faith when interpreting the life-world. Thus, as an existential theologian I interpret social construction, phenomenologically, from a participatory context within the life-world, not a descriptive or theoretical context.

*Social Construction Two: An Epistemology of Being, not
an Epistemology of Knowing*

I show in this section a shift in epistemological thinking from a scholastic to a phenomenological understanding. I follow Frederick Sontag, in that philosophy, properly understood, is supportive of theology as a *theologica ancillae*. Sontag suggests that “when philosophy regains its rightful place, asking questions that no science can determine for it, it becomes less certain but also more flexible so that theology can once again utilize its support.”¹²⁹ Philosophy, which assists in formulating doctrine, is

¹²⁷ M. Coxhead, *The Relevance of Bliss: A Contemporary Exploration of Mystic Experience* (London: Wildwood House, 1985), 26.

¹²⁸ J. T. De Jongh van Arkel, “A Paradigm for Pastoral Diagnosing” (D.Th. thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria 1987), 86.

¹²⁹ Frederick Sontag, *The Future of Theology: A Philosophical Basis for Contemporary Protestant Thought* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 24.

a natural human activity and is not to be confused with revelation.¹³⁰ Frederick Sontag speaking of the Western context states: “For all too long theologians, while realizing their kinship to philosophy, have acted like men determined to think that some particular philosophy was required of them.”¹³¹ As the scholastic theologian needs a secure grasp of Aristotelian thought and presumptions, so too, the phenomenological theologian needs a secure grasp of existential methodology and presumptions. Existential methodology and presumptions are better suited to assist the Orthodox believer than scholastic thought and presumptions. Two phenomenological philosophical presumptions I make in this dissertation on social construction are that:

- knowing is actualized in existential consciousness. It is not an act of intellectual apprehension of theoretical constructs.
- unity is actualized in a conscious activity of dialectical relationships rather than the intellectual and theoretical union of subject and object.

Understood in this manner both knowing and unity are intentional activities. According to the scholastics, knowledge is the deliberate act through which a human subject unites itself to an object, an act through which the intellect unites itself to being. This definition of knowing presumes a dichotomy between the

¹³⁰ 130 Robert Prentice, “The Expanding Universe of Spirit in Dewart’s ‘Religion, Language and Truth’,” *The Ecumenist* 10 (1971):28. See also Paul Avis, *Christians in Communion* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Mowbray, 1990), 35.

¹³¹ Frederick Sontag, *The Future of Theology: A Philosophical Basis for Contemporary Protestant Thought* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 28.

knower and the known. Merleau-Ponty suggests that in phenomenology the relationship between the knower and the known is of dynamic being, not of theoretical knowing. He writes that “the relationship between the subject and object is no longer that *relationship of knowing* postulated by classical idealism, wherein the object always seems the construction of the subject, but a *relationship of being* in which paradoxically, the subject is his body, his world, and his situation, by a sort of exchange” [Merleau-Ponty's italics].¹³² Thus, in intentional activities, no dichotomy constitutes the social construction of the life-world of a conscious being. In the life-world of conscious social construction there is differentiation and distinction within being, but no separation of being.

Scholastic knowledge is structured upon theoretical concepts which themselves are structured upon previous concepts.¹³³ Scholastic knowledge consists of theoretical interpretations which are theoretical interpretations of interpretations *ad infinitum*. Phenomenological knowledge differs from scholastic knowledge in that conscious (intended) phenomenological knowledge is constituted out of the present moment of being (existence). Noetic concepts, constructions of the human mind, are not revisions or refinements of ideal concepts but are actualizations of the present moment of being. Thus, the old schema of theoretical knowledge is not perpetuated nor preserved in a phenomenological interpretation of being which involves the subject's participation.

¹³² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-sense* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1964), 72.

¹³³ H. A. Hodges, *God Beyond Knowledge* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 111. Also, Fraser Watts and Mark Williams, *The Psychology of Religious Knowing*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 51.

Traditional epistemological theory presents itself primarily, but not exclusively, as objective and objective interpretation can be understood independently of the spectator's point of view. A phenomenological epistemology of being presents itself primarily, but not exclusively, as subjective. Thomas Torrance, writing of the subjective in the Christian legacy, states that "this subjective aspect, more evident in the Lutheran than in the Calvinist Reformation, was fostered everywhere by the spirit of the Renaissance in its humanism and individualism." He says that, prior to the Reformation subjectivism is disclosed through "the Augustinian stress upon religious selfconsciousness, inward conviction, and the passion of the soul."¹³⁴ Objectivism is a theoretical (speculative) philosophical term, whereas, objectivity is a phenomenological (existential) philosophical term for the same perception. These terms are not to be confused. Subjectivity is not to be confused with subjectivism. Subjectivism and objectivism denote a specific doctrine or system of knowledge, whereas subjectivity and objectivity are notions connoting a phenomenological and socially constructed understanding of the life-world. Thus, the phenomenological approach is not, of necessity, in conformity with any pre-given system of knowledge but is of a dynamic construction.

In an epistemology of being the boundaries of a relational state are not fixed as in a theoretical epistemology. In an epistemology of being one must think in terms of subjectivity and objectivity rather than in terms of subjectivism and objectivism. On account of such subjective interpretation, the author's biography is consciously or unconsciously, incorporated

¹³⁴ Thomas Torrance, *Theological Science* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 81.

into any interpretation of experience.¹³⁵ Hence, Graham Stanton notes that what is omitted in a biography may tell as much as what is included.¹³⁶ The context in which interpreters interpret ought to be known to the reader according to one researcher who suggests that philosophers justify their choices of methods and techniques.¹³⁷ Such conditions will be addressed in the interpretation of the theological texts considered as social constructions in this dissertation.

Theologians interpret the experience of their life-world according to the epistemological norms of their day. Thomas Aquinas, whose interpretations were greatly influenced by Aristotle, taught that human knowledge comes through one's native capacity to know and through one's experience.¹³⁸ This fits with scholastic Western thinking. Phenomenological knowledge, on the other hand, occurs through differentiation within the existential life-world of knower and known.¹³⁹ The phenomenological unity of the life-world precedes any interpretation or differentiation. Today, the experience of many Western theologians, and many Orthodox theologians inordinately influenced by Western thinking, is that theology suffers from a reliance on scholastic epistemology in interpreting

¹³⁵ R. J. Silvers, "A Silence within Phenomenology," *Interpretive Human Studies: An Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, eds. V. Darroch and R. J. Silvers (Washington: University of America Press).

¹³⁶ Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 5.

¹³⁷ J. K. Smith, "Hermeneutics and Qualitative Inquiry," in *Theory and Concepts in Qualitative Research*, eds. D. J. Flinders and G. E. Mills (New York: Columbia University, 1993), 197.

¹³⁸ Dermot Lane, *The Experience of God: An Invitation to do Theology* (Dublin: Veritas, 1989), 15.

¹³⁹ Earl MacCormac, *Metaphor and Myth in Science and Religion* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 1976), 145.

religious experience. To alleviate this difficulty I suggest that theologians ought to undertake an existential approach and subscribe to an epistemology that discloses the conscious differentiation of being.

Philosophy, as a human social construction, is capable of various expressions. Among them is psychology. Psychological social constructions reflect philosophical perspectives as is evidenced by Fraser Watts and Mark Williams who note that Thomas Aquinas conceived of an act of knowing which is not in conformity with classical scholastic expression. In discussing the psychology of religious knowing, they write:

Among theologians, Aquinas described “knowledge by connaturality”,...a knowledge of acquaintance, corresponding to that of the lover and the loved....This kind of contemplative knowledge of God...suggests the possibility of *direct* religious knowing [italics mine].¹⁴⁰

Direct religious knowing is phenomenological knowing in which a dichotomy between knower and known is not constructed. This direct religious knowing is an exception in Thomas Aquinas’s thinking. This particular example in his understanding supports the point made earlier that philosophical thinking develops contextually through evolution and is not *sui generis*. William Luijpen states that religious knowing belongs to the existential category of “love.” He writes that love is the only “category which can be thought to affect beings in such a

¹⁴⁰ Fraser Watts and Mark Williams, *The Psychology of Religious Knowing*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1988), 57. It would seem that this conclusion can be drawn from the *Summa Theologica* I-II, Question 112, Article 5 & S.T. II-II, Question 180.

way that freedom ensues.”¹⁴¹ That love brings freedom is not only a philosophical concept but a psychological one as well. In his book, *The Art of Loving*, written from a psychoanalytic perspective, Erik Fromm concludes that the practice of love results in “the *overcoming* of one’s *narcissism*,” permitting true freedom for the individual [Fromm’s italics].¹⁴² Also, concerning the work of Alfred Adler and Orthodox theology, Jamie Moran writes that “his teaching on ‘social interest’ or ‘social feeling,’ and sickness as the person’s abuse of this via a false individualism of power, rather than communal contribution, is a huge step towards understanding the Holy Spirit’s task of creating a communion of persons.”¹⁴³

Brain Gaybba, echoing the understanding of the Fathers, speaks of love as knowledge, a view that is particularly characteristic of the monastic theological tradition. Gaybba writes:

This sort of knowledge has been given various names: connatural knowledge (because it derives from the soul’s becoming like God, one nature with God, so to speak); affective knowledge (because it is inextricably linked to the soul’s personal relationship to and savouring of God); or simply experiential knowledge – the *cognitio experimentalis*. The stress on this type of knowledge is due to two factors in monastic culture. The first is the aim

¹⁴¹ William Luijpen, *Phenomenology and Humanism: A Primer in Existential Phenomenology* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University, 1966), 143.

¹⁴² Erik Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Bantam, 1963), 99.

¹⁴³ Jamie Moran, “Orthodoxy and Modern Depth Psychology,” in *Living Orthodoxy in the Modern World*, eds Andrew Walker and Costa Carras (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000), 149.

of monastic life. The second is the neo- Platonic world-view in which it was conceived.¹⁴⁴

Paul Tillich expresses much the same notion this way: “Love is the drive to bring together that which has been separated.”¹⁴⁵ In Tillich’s thought “separated” does not mean “divided.” Rather, it is closer in meaning to “distinguished.” Though the lover and the loved are distinguished, a bond remains. In short, the lover and the loved are dialectically united.¹⁴⁶

In scholastic epistemology, knowledge results in the identification of the quiddity of essences. In a phenomenological epistemology of being, however, knowledge, or one’s coming consciously to be, is actualized through self-differentiation of the self from the non-self. Such differentiation constitutes the human subject and it is characteristic of human behaviour within history and cultural formation. Such differentiation occurs in a dialectical relationship between two poles (self and non-self) yet these poles are not to be understood as unconnected. They are related within a dialectical unity. A subject which lacks a self-reflexive consciousness, that is to say, a self not conscious of itself, or a knower not knowing that he or she knows, or a lover not loving of himself or herself, cannot be aware of this relationship. Nor can such a subject be a subject in the personal sense of the term. The knower is aware of this process of differentiation, or, put alternatively, the knower is aware of knowing, the human being is aware of being human, and the

¹⁴⁴ Brian Gaybba. *Aspects of the Mediaeval History of Theology: 12th to 14th Centuries* (Pretoria, SA: University of South Africa, 1988), 9.

¹⁴⁵ Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue* (New York: Harper, 1965), 3.

¹⁴⁶ Daniel Guerrière, “Outline of a Phenomenology of the Religious,” *Research in Phenomenology* 4 (1974): 125.

lover is aware of loving. This self-reflexive understanding is part of the qualitative research approach I have taken in this dissertation.¹⁴⁷

In the ancient Greek context, any dynamic activity, movement, growth, development and meaning all occur in a closed system.¹⁴⁸ But in a phenomenological epistemology of being the interpretive context is the open system of one's existence in the world. Of this openness Herbert Spiegelberg writes: "Now openness...is to a considerable extent a matter of active control: we can open (or close) our mind and we can get set for an experience (and just as well guard ourselves against an experience)."¹⁴⁹ In the lived context, our life is initially an inherited existing-in-the-world and is not a primal existence, that is, an uninterpreted existence. We are born into an existence as previously constructed by the norms of our cultural and social environment. Richard Tarnas sees our conscious awareness of this previous construction as a positive opportunity for creativity in the postmodern context. He writes:

This awareness has not only affected the postmodern approach to past cultural world views and the history of changing scientific theories, but has also influenced the postmodern self-understanding itself, encouraging a more sympathetic attitude toward repressed or unorthodox

¹⁴⁷ J. K. Smith, "Hermeneutics and Qualitative Inquiry," in *Theory and Concepts in Qualitative Research*, eds. D. J. Flinders and G. E. Mills (New York: Columbia University, 1993), 184.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Torrance, *Theological Science* (London: Oxford University, 1969), 61.

¹⁴⁹ Herbert Spiegelberg, "Toward a Phenomenology of Experience," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1, (1964): 329.

perspectives and a more self-critical view of currently established ones.¹⁵⁰

Much contemporary Western thinking originates within an artificially schematized context. Thomas Torrance writes that, in Western development, “human experience was torn away from its ontological roots and schematized to the artificially contrived patterns of a mechanically conceived universe.”¹⁵¹ In this context the natural relationships of the pre-scientific world have been replaced by artificial relationships. Such artificial relationships are technological alterations in the social construction of our original life-world. We experience life as an order of objects that have been made objects for us before we were born into this life. The counter experience, arising from the development of our consciousness, is that a new order of relationships arises in a phenomenological epistemology of being when “the universe is no longer viewed in a closed deterministic way but is viewed as having an open-structured nature, which discloses itself to rational enquiry as it really is in its systemic relations.”¹⁵² In a phenomenological epistemology of being the subjective element is, by intent, combined with the objective element in the process of understanding. To exclude the subjective connection in interpretation would be a phenomenological philosophical mistake according to John Searle.¹⁵³ This is not necessarily so in scholastic epistemology.

¹⁵⁰ Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding Ideas that have Shaped Our World View* (New York: Ballantine, 1991), 397.

¹⁵¹ Thomas Torrance, *Theological Science* (London: Oxford University, 1969), 24.

¹⁵² F. L. Shults, “An Open Systems Model for Adult Learning in Theological Inquiry” (Ph.D. thesis, Walden University, 1991), 47.

¹⁵³ John Searle, *Minds, Brains and Science* (London: Penguin, 1984), 25.

In scholastic epistemology objective reality exists independently of subjective connections.

As a general rule contemporary religious researchers are often satisfied with societal explanations of knowledge. Phenomenological theologians, however, seek to actualize what it means to be through a conscious encounter with another in a social construction of some sort. A theological social construction involves creative and innovative interchange, either reflectively with oneself or with another subject (a person) or object (a social construction). However, an “encounter” need not be with a known entity. Gordon Kaufman writes: “It is the awareness of *my being limited* that we are here dealing with and thus in some sense an actual ‘encounter’ with that which *limits me*” [all Kaufman's italics].¹⁵⁴ In a phenomenological epistemology of being, social construction discloses to consciousness an interpretation which may or may not take cognizance of the divine. “That of God” may or may not be brought to consciousness as actualized in the knower. Such was much early understanding of social construction, presented in American academia via social psychology, which deleted any reference to that which is divine thus disqualifying its use by theologians. Edward Ross’s book, *Social Psychology: An Outline and Source Book*, falls within this category. To his credit, however, he does offer a useful methodological insight and suggests “that social psychology...studies the psychic planes and currents that come into existence among men in consequence of their association.”¹⁵⁵ From the preceding it

¹⁵⁴ Gordon Kaufman, “On the Meaning of ‘God’: Transcendence without Mythology,” in *New Theology* No 4, ed. M. E. Marty and D. G. Peerman (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 82.

¹⁵⁵ Edward Ross, *Social Psychology: An Outline and Source Book* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), vii.

becomes evident that a phenomenological epistemology of being is to be preferred to a theoretical epistemology of knowing.

Social Construction Three: Continual Interpretation, not Fixed Interpretation

Below, I explore the shift from fixed (scholastic) to continual (phenomenological) interpretation and investigate the social construction of theological notions. Within phenomenology an evolution from scholastic to “new style” interpretation continues to take place. In discussing the change from a speculative interpretation of theory to a phenomenological approach to the life-world, Edmund Husserl writes: “Clearly, only through a *total change* of the natural attitude, such that we no longer live, as heretofore, as human beings within natural existence, constantly effecting the validity of the pregiven world; rather, we must constantly deny ourselves this” [Husserl’s italics].¹⁵⁶ “The ‘new style’ phenomenological research in religion interprets ‘meaning’ in terms of connections existing between concrete people and those data which have a religious significance for them,” writes a theological researcher.¹⁵⁷ In existential theology one must consider a multitude of concepts, subjectively formed, that are extremely diverse in their meaning “so that the questions of agreement,

¹⁵⁶ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1970), 148.

¹⁵⁷ J. D. Waardenburg, “Research on Meaning in Religion,” in *Religion, Culture and Methodology*, ed. P. Th. van Baaren and H J Drijvers (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), 117.

disagreement, and truth can be formulated.”¹⁵⁸ To engage in existential interpretation is a challenging task. Don Ihde offers this advice to meet this challenge.

When one first learns a discipline, one must also learn a ‘tribal language.’ In philosophy, those who read Kant for the first time, or Leibniz, or even Nietzsche, may find words being used in a different and often technical way....But if a discipline is to be mastered, the technical language simply must be learned. That is as true of sciences, logic, alternate styles of philosophy as it is of phenomenology.¹⁵⁹

The movement from fixed to continual interpretation within western theological methodology, which has been a long-standing characteristic of Eastern theological methodology, arises partly from the attempts at reconciling contemporary interpretation and traditional understanding. Existential interpretation in theology is a methodological enquiry which discloses spiritual values arising from a moment of faith. “God is the direct object of faith, and faith is the direct object of theology. Faith as the object of theology may be studied from the [historical] sources and the contemporary experience of faith.”¹⁶⁰ These historical sources may be understood as the body of theological thought, characteristic of the Patristic Age, to which we relate in a community of belief. Heinrich Ott, from the

¹⁵⁸ Robert Neville, *Behind the Masks of God: An Essay Toward Comparative Theology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1991), 9.

¹⁵⁹ Don Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology: An introduction* (New York: G P Putnam's Sons, 1977), 19.

¹⁶⁰ H. Pietrse, “The Empirical Approach in Practical Theology: A Discussion with J A van der Ven,” *Religion and Theology* 1, (1994): 80.

perspective of an ecumenical inquiry into the disclosure of spiritual values, writes:

Again, although the Roman Catholic Church cannot alter the dogmas which it has defined in virtue of its teaching office, yet it in no way knows what future formulations will appear as a result of the process of understanding and interpretation. That someday a future pope will authoritatively interpret or reformulate one or another of the doctrinal teachings that have divided the churches, e.g., the doctrine of papal infallibility, in such a way that it could be acceptable to us Protestants, upon that rests a genuine ecumenical hope.¹⁶¹

For doctrinal teaching to be reformulated, a pope would need to abandon the scholastic tradition in favour of a phenomenological understanding. This leads me to suggest that the Orthodox theological social construction of texts, and their contexts, rests on such a moment of faith which remains open to continual interpretation which may not be the case with Roman theological social construction.

Earlier evolutionary shifts occurred when the interpretation of the universe, based on the thought of Ptolemy (367-285 BCE), changed to an interpretation based on the thought of Copernicus (1473-1543), and again with Newton (1642-1727). According to David Carr, Edmund Husserl recognized a similar evolutionary shift occurring when Greek thinking developed from a natural attitude, that is, one prior to critical reflection, to a theoretical attitude introduced about the

¹⁶¹ Heinrich Ott, "Language and Understanding" in *New Theology* 4, eds. M. E. Marty and D. G. Peerman (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 134.

time of Socrates (469-399 BCE).¹⁶² In the ancient Hellenistic perspective of interpretation the gods were ultimately responsible for everything, but not so today. Further, today, we are likely to hold a view opposed to Newtonian principles and hold a view based on a phenomenological theology. According to one theologian speaking of this shift: “Even God's position was influenced by this philosophy: He *was not responsible for everything anymore*” [italics mine].¹⁶³ That God is not responsible for everything anymore is an innovation in Western theological thought. In the East, however, such an attitude never was dominant. The Fathers never made God responsible for the believer's life. For the West, this is a significant development because persons may now recognize themselves as co-responsible agents, as well as, being co-creators of their life-world. Such recognition was always possible within Patristic theology. Being co-responsible agents and co-creators is an initial stage within a process of Christ-like perfection leading the faithful ultimately to participation in the divine being. In a scholastic approach this understanding is not possible. Maurice Merleau-Ponty observes: “The Catholic critics wish for things to reveal a God-directed orientation of the world and wish for man - like things - to be nothing but a nature heading toward its perfection.”¹⁶⁴ Co-responsibility and co-creativity are disclosed in an existential interpretation of the life-world. The insight of the apostle Paul is an example of such an existential

¹⁶² Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1970), xxxvi.

¹⁶³ J. T. De Jongh van Arkel, “A Paradigm for Pastoral Diagnosing” (D.Th. thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria 1987), 66.

¹⁶⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-sense* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1964), 75

interpretation. In his speech at the Areopagus, Paul hints at a divine presence immanently constituting our being. “Though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said ‘For we too are his offspring.’”¹⁶⁵

Charles Darwin introduced evolutionary ideas and Immanuel Kant introduced new philosophical ideas into western thought. According to Emil Brunner: “It was not the origin of the species as a scientific theory of the genesis of the forms of life, but the inclusion of man in the biological process of evolution, and the explanation of human forms of life in terms of biological laws of growth, which made Darwin’s theory a force in the life of our day.”¹⁶⁶ According to Franklin Baumer: “On the theory of knowledge [Kant] worked out, God became ‘speculatively unknowable.’ Thus, neither philosophy nor science any longer led to God, as they had done in the days of Descartes, Newton and Christian Wolff.”¹⁶⁷ Further, reflecting contemporary thinking, one theologian identifies evolution as part of the New Age consciousness which, as Edward Moore believes, is “a sort of New Age religiosity that is as far afield from genuine religious feeling as one can possibly get.”¹⁶⁸ However, this New Age understanding of evolution is not to be identified with evolution in the Darwinian sense, “but it should be noted that in contrast to Darwinian theory, New Age evolutionists commonly introduce some integrating and teleological force of ‘Mind’ or

¹⁶⁵ Acts 17:28 NRSV.

¹⁶⁶ Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt: A Christian Anthropology* (London: Lutterworth, 1942), 34.

¹⁶⁷ Franklin Baumer, *Modern European Thought: Continuity and Change in Ideas, 1600-1950* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 192.

¹⁶⁸ Edward Moore, *Plato* (Tirril, Penrith, UK: Humanities-Ebooks.co.uk, 2007), 79.

‘Intention’.”¹⁶⁹ These interpretations of Darwin, Kant and Steyn depart from the conventional and previously accepted understanding of their socially constructed worlds. Darwin’s evolutionary thought introduced “change” as natural and part of the developmental process, and “becoming” as intrinsic to human evolutionary development. Edmund Husserl identifies this phenomenon of change as the ‘Heraclitean flux,’ and he says:

We wish, then, to consider the surrounding life-world concretely, in its neglected relativity and according to all the manners of relativity belonging essentially to it...as they give themselves to us at first in straightforward experience....Our exclusive task shall be to comprehend precisely this style, precisely this whole merely subjective and apparently incomprehensible ‘Heraclitean flux’” [Husserl’s italics].¹⁷⁰

About such creative thinking Richard Tarnas writes:

We see why such geniuses regularly experience their intellectual breakthrough as a profound illumination, a revelation of the divine creative principle itself, as with Newton's exclamation to God, “I think Thy thoughts after Thee!” For the human mind is following the numinous archetypal path that is unfolding from within it.¹⁷¹

Darwinian and Kantian thought structures, I suggest, form part of the archetypal path and in Carl Jung’s sense “are transmitted

¹⁶⁹ C. Steyn, “Responsibility as an Element in New Age Consciousness,” *Religion and Theology* 1(1994): 284.

¹⁷⁰ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1970), 156.

¹⁷¹ Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding Ideas that have Shaped Our World View* (New York: Ballantine, 1991), 438.

as possibilities, determining our behaviour” but not decidedly so.¹⁷² Kant's creative thinking introduced a new philosophical understanding about intelligible categories. They exist but are not perceptible. However, neither a Cartesian, nor a Newtonian, nor a Kantian understanding of the universe brings western interpretation nearer to certitude. None of these understandings provides a final resolution to existential theological problems. Therefore, theologians, both Western and Orthodox, continue to look for new interpretations in seeking answers to their questions. This dissertation aids in that quest.

Philosophical understanding and theological interpretation undergo an *aggiornamento*, or better, a *ressourcement*, when understood from a phenomenological perspective and become disengaged from a culture that no longer exists. It is generally understood, particularly among Roman Catholics, that *aggiornamento* began with Pope John XXIII. However, as an ecumenical theologian notes:

It is no belittlement of Pope John to suggest that he was not the creator of this renewal movement, which already existed before his pontificate; that what he did was to welcome and give its name (*aggiornamento*) and aim to the whole movement, to extend to it the full sympathy and encouragement of his person and of his office and to emphasize its implications for Christian unity.¹⁷³

Tracey Rowland notes that *ressourcement* seeks to retrieve “the treasury of Patristic thought,” whereas, *aggiornamento*, connotes an “updating to meet the requirements of some external

¹⁷² Robert Young, *Psychotherapy: Acceptance or Denial* (Ilminster, Somerset, U.K.: Somerset Independent University, 1988), 119.

¹⁷³ Michael Hurley, *Theology of Ecumenism* (Notre Dame: Fides, 1969), 68.

standard.”¹⁷⁴ The former, *ressourcement*, belongs to phenomenological philosophy and the latter, *aggiornamento*, to scholastic philosophy. *Ressourcement*, as a liberating philosophical approach, reveals individual persons as participants, that is, co-creators within and of their *Lebenswelt*. Interestingly, especially in light of contemporary ecological thinking, Paul Tillich does not seem to limit this co-creativity to human beings but, by a different term, predicates it of non-human beings:

I mean that, despite human weaknesses, there is something in man that God did not want to destroy....God took a risk, and we must take a risk. He took a risk in permitting man to reach his full humanity....I use the word spontaneity here for animals and plants, and probably even molecules,...but I cannot describe this process fully. I learned the fact from biologists and neurologists.¹⁷⁵

The co-participation in divine creativity by all creatures is the ‘risk’ God took, which anticipates possible failure.

Our human nature demands that we respond. We cannot not act. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka writes “man’s freedom is basically *responsibility* for his realization; this responsibility is, however, not only to himself for his own strict individuality but to all men” [Tymieniecka’s italics].¹⁷⁶ Continual interpretation, or evolution in methodology, does not occur simply for novelty’s sake, as if contemporary thought were merely tired of classical expression. Rather, continual interpretation of contemporary

¹⁷⁴ Tracey Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition after Vatican II* (London: Routledge, 2003), 7/19.

¹⁷⁵ Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue* (New York: Harper, 1965), 184.

¹⁷⁶ Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Phenomenology and Science in Contemporary European Thought* (New York: Noonday, 1962), 181.

theological thought seeks new meaning out of religious experience and Tradition. Andrew Walker observes that “spirituality is something that we have to rediscover in every generation, in order that we remain prophets in fact and not merely in principle; that we are renewers of Tradition and renewed by it, and not merely rehearsers of it.”¹⁷⁷ According to Langdon Gilkey continual interpretation occurs with “a sense of the holy or sacred as the prior condition for the meaningfulness of *any* form of theology” [Gilkey’s italics].¹⁷⁸

Do some Orthodox theologians understand themselves as co-responsible agents seeking a method of textual interpretation and social construction which will express their participatory role in the religious interpretation of the life-world? This is a contemporary question. Our inherited theological understanding, either of the Western or Patristic traditions, is not false. Rather, it is inadequate for the contemporary context. Reinforcing the idea that Greek understanding is not error, Edmund Husserl writes: “To express it more fully: the historical surrounding world of the Greeks is not the objective world in our sense but rather their ‘world-representation,’ i.e., their own subjective validity with all the actualities which are valid for them within it, including, for example, gods, demons, etc.”¹⁷⁹ In western theological thinking, debate has moved from the question of the structure of religious language (a scholastic

¹⁷⁷ Andrew Walker, “The Prophetic Role of Orthodoxy in Contemporary Culture,” in *Living Orthodoxy in the Modern World*, eds. Andrew Walker and Costa Carras (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000), 232.

¹⁷⁸ Langdon Gilkey, *Catholicism Confronts Modernity: A Protestant View* (New York: Crossroad, 1975), 210.

¹⁷⁹ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1970), 272.

issue) to “the more radical question of its possibility as a mode of meaningful discourse” (an existential issue) in which the interpreter is part of the interpretation.¹⁸⁰ The interpreter being part of the interpretation introduces changes into the meaning of theological social constructions. Unlike scholastic thinking the Patristic tradition holds that a meaningful discourse involves the interpreter as part of the interpretation.

In an article entitled ‘Renewal of the Doctrine of Man,’ Charles Möeller writes of existential theological interpretive structures that “it is not by escaping from the real weight of these structures that we will be saved, but through them, by accepting our condition; not by trying to outstrip time but by living the *theologia crucis*” [theological crux].¹⁸¹ In existential interpretation the social construction of the Christian’s life-world is the *theologia crucis* in which religious matters must be engaged. For most of us living in the Christian West, modernity is the context of the *theologia crucis*, and according to Jurgen Habermas, “modernity can and will no longer borrow the criteria...from the models supplied by another epoch; *it has to create its normativity out of itself*” [Habermas’s italics].¹⁸² In an existential interpretation of the *theologia crucis*, theology becomes “fundamentally an activity of construction (and reconstruction) not description or exposition, as it has ordinarily been understood in the past.”¹⁸³ A phenomenological

¹⁸⁰ Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-language* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 13.

¹⁸¹ Charles Möeller, “Renewal of the Doctrine of Man,” in *Renewal of Religious Structures*, ed. L. K. Shook (Montréal: Palm, 1968), 435.

¹⁸² Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 7.

¹⁸³ Gordon Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), x.

methodology does disclose something new and does not simply present variations of previous interpretations. What is new is the dialectical interpretation of relationships. New dialectical interpretations raise new questions requiring further innovative resolutions. According to Gary Madison "*New meanings are simply new ways of relating to things by means of new or unusual usages of words (or their semiotic equivalent in other expressive media),*" which, I suggest, occurs in the social construction of experience [Madison's italics].¹⁸⁴

Interpretation of relationships is a continual action of the self-conscious subject, that is, of the person who is capable of consciously effecting future interpretation. On future understanding there seems to be an area common to the classical philosophical tradition and phenomenological understanding. Eulalio Baltazar writes: "In the whole Greek tradition of philosophy, the present is the region of being; the future is non-being...."¹⁸⁵ Meaning is actualized in the present moment through eidetic ontological social construction. This is an evolutionary development away from scholastic understanding in which the subject defines itself according to the mind of another from outside of the subject. In traditional Western theology the definition of the subject originates in the mind of God and is to conform to the mind of God. In a phenomenological understanding, or in the Patristic way of thinking, the subject is to actualize itself within an existential unity in the presence of the self with another, that is, in a relationship that admits no dichotomy between itself and the other.

¹⁸⁴ Gary Madison, *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity: Figures and Themes* (Bloomington: IN: Indiana University, 1988), 188.

¹⁸⁵ Eulalio Baltazar, "Teilhard de Chardin: A Philosophy of Procession," in *New Theology* No 2, eds. M. E. Marty and D. G. Peerman (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 145.

We seek to interpret our experience in a language adapted to the world in which we live, according to Langdon Gilkey and, indeed, “we cannot legitimately and meaningfully conceive except in terms of the world *we inhabit*” [Gilkey’s italics].¹⁸⁶ Specific cultures provide the context in which existential interpretation is continually formulated and reformulated. History shows that those methodologies or interpretations that die out have not exhausted their meaning. Rather, other methodologies which are more suitably adapted to a specific cultural interpretation have become accepted. As an example, Raymond Young, in his research shows how unsuitable psychotherapeutic methodologies have been replaced by culturally appropriate ones.¹⁸⁷ Yet in theology, there is still no hermeneutic, no clear method, no set of rules to secure a definite interpretation of religious experience. Peter Berger suggests that “theological thought should follow an inductive approach...that begins with ordinary human experience...and moves on from there to religious affirmations about the nature of reality.”¹⁸⁸ A cyclic, or better, a spiral, manner of thinking obtains in the phenomenological approach. This activity is the hermeneutical circle.¹⁸⁹ That which is new is brought to consciousness not from elsewhere, that is, theoretically, but, phenomenologically, that is, brought to consciousness from the immediate context of the

¹⁸⁶ Langdon Gilkey, *Catholicism Confronts Modernity: A Protestant View* (New York: Crossroad, 1975), 102.

¹⁸⁷ Raymond Young, *Psychotherapy: Acceptance or Denial* (Ilminster, Somerset, U.K.: Somerset Independent University Press, 1988).

¹⁸⁸ Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1980), ix.

¹⁸⁹ 189 J. K. Smith, “Hermeneutics and Qualitative Inquiry,” in *Theory and Concepts in Qualitative Research*, eds. D. J. Flinders and G. E. Mills (New York: Columbia University, 1993), 187.

lifeworld. Non-scholastic research procedures make conclusions on the basis of what the data dictate. Influenced by Hans Frei, Avery Dulles writes of narrative interpretation: "Interpretation must appropriate the narrative in its own right and not pose questions that arise out of a different horizon."¹⁹⁰ *Inter alia*, phenomenological interpretation must address social construction existentially in its own right, and not pose questions from another horizon.

Phenomenological theological interpretation gives rise to an ecclesial, as opposed to an ecclesiastical, tradition. I do not say that an ecclesial tradition is to be understood as exclusive of, or as exhaustive of, or co-extensive with, a canonical social structure, that is, a *de jure* structure that characterizes the ecclesiastical tradition. A traditionally normative canonical social structure is, however, characteristic of an ecclesial tradition. In the modern context and experience a *de jure* social construction is not the only structure for an ecclesial tradition. In other words, the social construction of the believing community, the Church, is broader than her canons and her life extends beyond her canons. Johaan Wolfaardt, quoted by D M Ackermann, maintains that "communicative actions which mediate the Christian faith outside the *traditional* church framework can also become objects of study" [my italics].¹⁹¹ Further, Langdon Gilkey stresses the religious aspect of secular experience, or experience outside the traditional Church, in one

¹⁹⁰ Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (New York: Crossroad., 1992), 82.

¹⁹¹ D. M. Ackermann, "Liberating Praxis and the Black Sash: A Feminist Theological Perspective" (D.Th. thesis, University of South Africa, 1990), 21.

of his books.¹⁹² Similarly, Richard Shaull does not conceive a sharp distinction between a believing community and the public forum. Although admitting that God may be encountered outside the visible boundaries of the church, he goes on to write: "I have a certain suspicion that this conception [the public forum] of the Church, with all its richness and power, does not do justice to the New Testament witness regarding the nature of the Church."¹⁹³ In effect, an ecclesial tradition must be recognized as broader than an ecclesiastical tradition, for its social construction to be proper to Orthodoxy. To preempt any allegation of equating the sacred and the secular perspective, Paul Ricoeur confesses: "In brief, the church is, for me, the place where I can most authentically live the dialectic between conviction and responsibility."¹⁹⁴ For Ricoeur the believing community is necessary but its socially constructed form appears not to be predetermined. Within phenomenological theological understanding the social construction of the ecclesial community is subject to continual actualization but not fossilized canonical form. However, regardless of how the ecclesial community is constructed both, scholastic and phenomenological models, "structure human experience and give that experience coherence, meaning and healing."¹⁹⁵ This coherence, meaning and healing, which is a continual activity, is more suitable to Orthodox and

¹⁹² Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-language* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969).

¹⁹³ R. M. Shaull, "The Form of the Church in the Modern Diaspora," in *New Theology* 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 284.

¹⁹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, "Tasks of the Ecclesial Community in the Modern World," in *Renewal of Religious Structures*, ed. L. K. Shook (Montréal: Palm, 1968), 254.

¹⁹⁵ Langdon Gilkey, *Catholicism Confronts Modernity: A Protestant View* (New York: Crossroad, 1975), 11.

Latin theologians in its phenomenological form than scholastic form.

PART TWO

TWO CASE STUDIES IN ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

Preamble

The two phenomenological case studies of theological texts, (ecological manuscripts and canon law), undertaken below are based on principles discussed in Part One. In the following study I apply to these theological texts, and their socially constructed contexts, the four prerequisite conditions that Samuel Ijsseling lists as necessary before phenomenological literary research begins. Given that literary texts are products of their respective communities the prerequisites for studying these texts are, *inter alia*, common to those used for studying the social constructions of their communities of origin. In this case I make an interpretation of the texts, and their context, from within an holistic perspective.¹⁹⁶ The first prerequisite for studying social constructions, and their texts, is that the “problematic is always presented to us from the midst of a tradition...necessarily

¹⁹⁶ While not discussing the difference in spelling between “holistic” and “wholistic”, and their particular meanings, I do intend social construction to be understood in the sense of “holistic” as introduced into philosophical thinking by Jan Christian Smuts. He introduced the notion that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” and crafted the term “holism” from the Greek, “holon”, to distinguish his notion from that of a classical perspective. See Allan Savage, “Wholism or Holism in Individual Psychology and Theology,” in *Faith, Hope and Charity as Character Traits in Adler’s Individual Psychology: With Related Essays in Spirituality and Phenomenology*, A. Savage and S. Nicholls (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003).

‘mediated’ by a canon of actually present works.”¹⁹⁷ The second prerequisite is that theological social constructions, and their texts, are presented such that we are to interpret them dialectically. “We are able to speak about them, and they, too, have something to say to us” (Ijsseling 1981:179). The third prerequisite I acknowledge with reservation. I suspect it belongs more properly to theoretical interpretation than to phenomenological interpretation. It is that theological social constructions, and their contexts, are revelatory of a certain “being-in-their own-right.” If social construction reveals an object possessing “being-in-its-own right” this suggests that theological social constructions exist and operate independently of their origin. In this aspect of Ijsseling's understanding, it seems to me that theological social constructions would function more like signs, a Latin understanding, than symbols, an Eastern understanding. Signs function to engender stability of perception but this is not the case with symbols or any written texts I suggest. Plato, according to Edward Moore, held a similar understanding with respect to written dialogues.¹⁹⁸ I render symbol in the sense understood within the Eastern tradition where the Creeds, and the local and ecumenical synods, are symbols of faith. Symbols contrast with signs which signify some thing or objective reality. Theological social constructions, and their contexts, within Ijsseling's perspective have “a certain *aseitas*; they lead a life of their own, independent of their origin, and they have their own effectivity or operativity” (Ijsseling 1981:180). The fourth prerequisite concerns the acceptance of

¹⁹⁷ Samuel Ijsseling, “Philosophy and Textuality Concerning a Rhetorical Reading of Philosophical Texts,” *Research in Phenomenology* 11 (1981): 177.

¹⁹⁸ 198 Edward Moore, *Plato* (Tirril, Penrith, UK: Humanities-Ebooks.co.uk, 2007), 49.

authorship. Like the texts they produce, social constructions do not have a single author, although they often have a single architect. Within literary criticism it is recognized that the author of a text is not necessarily the redactor of the text. Texts, in fact, have many authors (Ijsseling 1981:182). These prerequisites may be applied in the understanding of social constructions within Orthodox theology. This is demonstrated within an ecclesial tradition where social construction expresses a collective belief. Samuel Ijsseling (1981:180) reminds us that “a text never has a single father or a single origin....The genealogy of a text is an extremely complex affair.” So it is with social construction within an ecclesial tradition.

Not all researchers agree with Ijsseling’s third prerequisite being an objective sign. Allan Bloom writes that phenomenological interpretation belongs to the Deconstructionist School which suppresses reason and denies the possibility of objective truth. He notes that “the interpreter’s creative activity [or social construction] is more important than the text; there is no text, only interpretation [by] the subjective, creative selves of these interpreters, who say that there is both no text and no reality to which the texts refer.”¹⁹⁹ Further, another author disagrees with Samuel Ijsseling’s third prerequisite as outlined above. A literary work, he states, “differs from the absolute and ideal object by its *modus existentiae*, that is, heteronomy, derivation and contingency. It does not possess an essence of its own.”²⁰⁰ In this dissertation I follow Harold

¹⁹⁹ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 379.

²⁰⁰ J. Fizer, “Artistic Analysis, Aesthetic Concentration: Reflection upon Roman Ingarden’s Reflections,” in *Language, Literature and*

Linstone's and Murray Turoff's understanding of method and Samuel Ijsseling's understanding of context which present guideposts for the practical investigation of ecological theology and canon law.²⁰¹

Mario Valdés suggests four possible questions to investigate in phenomenological textual criticism, which may be applied to Orthodox theological social construction.

- How does the text operate?
- What does the text speak about?
- What does the text say to me?
- How have I read the text?²⁰²

The structural features of a classical interpretation are not the same as the structural features of an existential interpretation. This difference in structural features is due to a differing ontological experience. Traditionally structured texts, and their socially constructed contexts, reflect a scholastic and fixed ontology, whereas existentially structured texts, and their socially constructed contexts, reflect an existential dynamic ontology. Whether the theological texts, and their social constructions, refer to something real and external is not the primary issue. The primary issue is to interpret what is believed as expressed in the texts, or in social constructions, in terms of Valdés's second question: "What does the text speak about?"

A phenomenological approach to the texts, and their social constructions, discloses the convictions of individuals

Meaning I: Problems of Literary Theory, ed. John Odmark (Amsterdam: John Benjamins B.V., 1979), 358.

²⁰¹ Murray Turoff, "The Delphi Policy," in *The Delphi Method: Techniques and Applications*, eds. M. Turoff and H. Linstone (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975).

²⁰² Mario Valdés, *Phenomenological Hermeneutics and the Study of Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1987), 67.

within a believing community and the convictions of the community itself as to what these *foci* speak about. The traditional formula, *lex orandi, lex credendi* (the law of prayer is the law of belief), may be existentially re-interpreted as: “What is believed is what is socially constructed.” From this perspective beliefs are proper to an existential investigation as social construction is proper to phenomenological investigation.

FIRST CASE STUDY: ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY

Ecological Theology: As an Orthodox Phenomenological Social Construction

Without question the Fathers did not think in modern terms of “ecology” and “environment” and write accordingly, neither did the ancient Greek philosophers think this way. This should not be surprising. Laura Westra and Thomas Robinson have outlined a non-phenomenological philosophical approach in addressing ecological issues. However, when applying Greek philosophical thought to contemporary ecological problems they write that “We should also feel free to speculate whether, had they been faced with our problems (problems that clearly had no existence during their lifetimes), anything present in their thought might not suggest a positive, useful ‘new’ approach.”²⁰³ In other words a Hellenic philosophical system need not be a closed system. It may contain the seeds of new ideas thus preventing the illusion of a philosophical stability of ideas as was noted earlier. We know that the Fathers did write about a divine-human relationships which we may envision as social

²⁰³ Laura Westra and Thomas Robinson, *The Greeks and the Environment* (Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham, MD: 1997), 4.

constructions arising out of their experience of the ecclesial community. These relationships, as a social constructions, in Western culture have become intellectualized such that any spiritual dynamic in this world has been diminished by the introduction of an artificial dichotomy within the divine-human relationship. Theological thought, both Eastern (Patristic) and Western (scholastic), is grappling with the ecological crisis. The significance of this crisis may be better understood through a phenomenological social construction rather than from a scholastic social construction. A Western thinker, with sympathies for Patristic thought, Henryk Skolimowski, explored the ecological crisis and wrote: “The act of perception [of the divine-human relationship] is unitary, holistic, and complete; its intellectual deciphering is partial and abstract, always a contrived process.”²⁰⁴ These words apply within the Patristic tradition. In the Patristic tradition the continuing experience of the Church is the primary locus in which to be guided by the presence of the Holy Spirit. In this way the faithful will make the correct decisions about their ecological future. Ironically, as Elizabeth Theokritoff, notes the Church is often the last place most people look for spiritual direction.²⁰⁵

Traditional humanism bases itself on the Promethian myth which insists on the independence and the greatness of humanity and the rejection of a spiritual component. In this conception humanity, in opposition to divinity, may appropriate

²⁰⁴ Henryk Skolimowski, *The Theatre of the Mind: Evolution in the Sensitive Cosmos* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1984), 146.

²⁰⁵ Elizabeth Theokritoff, “‘Thine of Thine Own’: Orthodoxy and Ecology.” Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, <<http://www.goarch.org/print/en/ourfaith/article8022.asp>> (4 June, 2007).

nature for its purposes and its needs. Such an attitude toward ecological social construction is not in keeping with Orthodox theological thinking. Orthodox theological thinking considers the person as a unitary partner with nature and the environment. In short Orthodox ecological theology presupposes an ecological humanitarianism, not ecological humanism. John Zizioulas sees the ecological problem as resulting from secular humanism that divides creator and creation. He says that “when we come to the ecological problem, we see that its roots lie in the fact that human beings have separated themselves from the rest of creation.”²⁰⁶ Recall that humanitarianism seeks to promote human welfare, whereas, humanism is a non-religious philosophy based on secular values. Orthodox ecological theology is not simply a new label invented to protect nature and its resources. Orthodox ecological theology is a phenomenological social construction and implies a fundamental relationship to the environment along with our place in it and this requires the proper social construction of relationships on our part. This ecological theology reflects a unitary vision which considers theological interpretation and humanity in relation to each other. In short, Orthodox ecological theology reflects an enlarged vision of the evolving environment which recognizes no conflict between the Church and science. This enlarged vision is tantamount to a new vision and has been characteristic of Orthodox theology for some time, Zizioulas notes.

What we need is a new attitude, a new mentality, a new ethos, and this can be created with the help of the Church. This has happened throughout the centuries, at least in the

²⁰⁶ 206 John Zizioulas, “Man the Priest of Creation,” in *Living Orthodoxy in the Modern World*, eds. Andrew Walker and Costa Carras (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000), 185.

Orthodox Church, where the faithful were brought up on fasting, on respecting the material world and acknowledging through the liturgy that creation belongs to God.²⁰⁷

The age which is approaching is the age of management of our scientific abilities in concert with our divine ends. As human inhabitants of the earth we have choose between two competing options. One option is to be “custodians of the past” and the second is to be “architects of the future.” From our place within the Church, or the ecclesial community, we are to work with science to transform our environment. That is, create social constructions that properly reflect the divine-human relationship. In this connection, Pope John Paul II made a significant observation, applicable to both the Western and Patristic experience, in an address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in 1996. The “fruitfulness of frank dialogue” will arise from dialogue between the Church and science and not religion and science as it is often understood, the Pope noted.

Much in our Western culture persuades us that the universe is a hostile and solitary place. This is the general view of the universe out of which many of our contemporary philosophical questions are formed. John Chrssavgis writes, concerning the ecological crisis, that

it is a crisis concerning the way we perceive reality, the way we imagine or image our world. We are treating our environment, our planet, in an inhuman, Godforsaken

²⁰⁷ John Zizioulas, “Man the Priest of Creation,” in *Living Orthodoxy in the Modern World*, eds. Andrew Walker and Costa Carras (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000), 188.

manner – precisely because we see it in this way, precisely because we see ourselves in this way.²⁰⁸

But this is not the Orthodox view of the structure of the universe which is a predominately theological view, not a philosophical view. Orthodox ecological theology presents a countercultural experience, as it were, to the Western cultural tradition by reconciling the human system of values within a humanitarian vision of the universe. The humanitarian vision and the divine mind are complementary as understood in the traditional and pre-technological cultures. Elias Economou has remarked that, strictly speaking, the ecological crisis is not a question of our relationship to nature alone but a question of the relationship to the Creator along with God's purpose in creating the world.²⁰⁹ This understanding reflects a socially constructed set of relationships within our system of human values which includes the ethical codes of civilization, and other faiths, so that the universe is seen as a harmonious place favourable, not hostile, to the efforts of divine-human cooperation.

Cultures and traditions socially construct themselves based on their spiritual inheritance. Social construction arising out of an un-inherited culture or tradition may easily become an illusion lacking a historical critique and thus not truly reflect reality. Upon first consideration this position may appear to contradict that of Habermas's observation noted above, that is, as moderns we must create our norms out of our experience, not the

²⁰⁸ John Chryssavgis, *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer: The Ecological Vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew I* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 23.

²⁰⁹ Elias Economou, "An Orthodox View of the Ecological Crisis. Myriobiblos,"
<http://www.myriobiblos.gr/texts/english/economou_ecology.html>
(28 Sept., 2007).

inherited concepts of the past. To prevent misunderstanding I follow Patrick Henry Reardon's well-articulated understanding of the relationship between culture and tradition within Orthodox theology.²¹⁰ According to him, social construction within tradition and culture is not question of resuscitating novel ideas that worked in the past, but, rather it is a question of proposing new social constructions appropriate to the materials of our moral and spiritual inheritances. To create norms from our experience is not that of the "Lazarus effect" as some might suspect, that is, a resuscitation to the "old" life. Rather, for theologians to create norms out of their experience, individual and collective, is the "Christian effect," a resurrection to the "new" life. The ancient Greeks were highly individualistic in their thinking but they never developed a doctrine of individualism such is as found in the contemporary Western culture. The inordinate philosophical understanding of the individual prevalent in the West is due to a loss of the perception of a divine-human relationship. Because this intrinsic spiritual relationship is rejected technical values become more and more dominant. Further, technological values become the exclusive norm of international goals to which developing cultures aspire. Orthodox theological social construction transcends the limitations of a technological system. A purely humanistic and scientific cosmology, that reflects only a technological social construction, that excludes divinity in its composition, is

²¹⁰ Fr Patrick Henry Reardon's address, "Tradition and Culture," was given at a colloquium for Orthodox and Anglican Christians at St Andrew House Centre for Orthodox Christian Studies, 29/30 January 2007. It is available via audio on Ancient Faith Radio <<http://www.ancientfaithradio.com/specials/faithoffathers>> (28 Sept., 2007).

deficient and inimical to human beings, and is not reflective of an Orthodox social construction.

Let us not continue with the illusion that a scientific vision will be a safe refuge for us and provide an opportunity to satisfy all our temporal needs. The pursuit of power, material values, consumer values and similar ideologies is based on a conception of the universe as a temporal corporation, not as an eternal Holy Temple wherein God resides. The danger here is that a temporal corporation mentality may allow for the construction of an environmental habitat suitable for secular-minded humans with no appreciation of an eternal spirituality. There are many systems of knowledge, but none can contain the totality, nor complexity, of the universe in its existential construction of community. The Orthodox theological view is opposed to any social construction that lacks an eternal spirituality and strives to maintain the experience of the universe as a Holy Temple. In conformity with this tradition, Section XIII, “The Church and Ecological Problems”, a statement in *The Orthodox Church in Society: The Basis of the Social Contract of the Russian Orthodox Church*, reads:

The anthropogenic background of ecological problems shows that we tend to change the world around us in accordance with our own inner world; therefore, the transformation of nature should begin with the transformation of the soul. According the Maxim the Confessor, man can turn the earth into paradise only if he carried paradise in himself.²¹¹

²¹¹ In Communion: The web site of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship,
<<http://incommunion.org/articles/resources/theorthodox-church-and-society/xiii>>(28 Sept., 2007).

The divine-human universe unfolds in a process of continual transcendence of which we are necessarily a part. In this divine-human universe human values govern inter-human relations, our social constructions, as well as those values between humanity and all life, temporal and divine. In such an understanding of the universe, humanity appears as a part and an extension of the evolutionary process. The evolving universe allows us to recognize a development within the sacredness of humanity. The development of sacredness frees humanity from captivity by a hostile environment. Our understanding of an evolutionary sacredness arises out of the experience of holiness, and allows humanity to transcend that nihilism and moral relativism, characteristic of Western philosophy, which has no foundation in Orthodox theological thinking. That which is sacred in this world presents itself in the following ways within Orthodox theology: the necessity of transcendence, the celebration of life, the necessity of protecting and of the valuing of the living environment around us. Sacred social construction within Orthodoxy is founded on these experiences. In contrast, the culture of technology, which is not sacred, is void of transcendence, emptied of celebration of life and of the valuing of the environment. A technological imperative dominates in a culture which has reversed its anthropological thinking in which machines dictate modes of human behaviour. An example of this reversal in modern literature, I suggest, is the theme reflected in the futuristic novel, *2001 Space Odyssey*, in which HAL, the computerized machine, became, to all intents and purposes, human.²¹² Today, humans face the opposite danger within the global ecological crisis. Humans are becoming like the machines they create.

²¹² Arthur C. Clarke, *2001 Space Odyssey* (New York: Bantam, 1982).

The unique, sacred, evolutionary, and divine-human social construction, or, which is the same thing, creation, opens us to transcendence and to personal sanctification such that we grow in the divine life. To the degree that we sacrifice ourselves, consciously or unconsciously, we are transformed into instruments to affect other purposes in life. In Christian cosmology every thing is God's property. Such a cosmology constitutes an environment within which to construct a house for the divine-human interaction which generates ethical principles for an authentic social construction. The motive for mere, and some would argue inauthentic, technological progress is industrial and economic efficiency. However, as human beings, there is "that of God" in us and all of us must play our part on the evolutionary stage – to paraphrase William Shakespeare.²¹³ As a social construction intended for human spiritual perfection, Orthodoxy performs a positive role on I recall, when the movie was first released, it was pointed out that the acronym HAL, reads IBM, when the immediately subsequent letters are combined. the world's stage. Overwhelmed by material progress, we often forget that humans constitute a holy and wholesome divine-human presence within Orthodoxy. The ecological preservation of life is one action by which Orthodox Christians can take responsibility, as partners with God, in a divine social construction, or, better, in the conscious creation of our future existence.

²¹³ Shakespeare, William. *As You Like It*. Act II, Scene VII.

The Phenomenological Stance as Pre-requisite to Ecological Theology

Ecological theology invites us to discover the relationships of human life within the universe. Our motivation in this discovery is often mistakenly focused on a merely scientific vision of the world, and on the less than satisfactory social constructions created by this vision. Scientific understanding has become so subtle and complex in articulating human relationships that we are often impeded in achieving any humanitarian advancement and thus fall back on unrealistic philosophical positions.

An alternate understanding to the scientific one is required. Orthodox ecological theology requires an alternative *theologica ancillae* to replace the scholastic Aristotelian one. The alternative is a phenomenological epistemological understanding which must become the way of knowing, where existential being, not metaphysical theory, is the foundation of the divine-human relationships. Such a phenomenological stance not only changes our understanding of technology, our economy and our way of life, but also changes our ethics and set of normative values. The movement away from the Aristotelian-derived system of thinking, which has dominated the West, has been thoroughly addressed by Leslie Dewart. He describes this movement positively as the conscious creation of the future of belief.²¹⁴ It is not possible any longer to refer to the positivism of the Western scientific spirit such as it was conceived in the 17th century. This view is now inadequate. A phenomenological understanding of interdependent relationships that occur in the

²¹⁴ Leslie Dewart, *The Future of Belief: Theism in a World Come of Age* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966).

divine-human cosmos presents a better stance by which to face our problems of individual alienation, social destruction, environmental crises and research into ecological relationships.

Western philosophy makes a distinction between knowledge and values. Their original unity, as understood in Orthodox Christian theology, has been intellectually and artificially separated within the Western tradition. As a result, two different thinking processes have developed. One is the investigation into the physical world by scientific thinkers open to transcendental values and the other is one that neglects spiritual or divine values. I have noted above, however, that the prescientific thinking process retains spiritual or divine values. The separation based on scientific/technological logic is misleading because, as humans in the divine-human cosmos, we are not engaged in two processes. Rather, we are engaged in one phenomenological stance with two differing perspectives. Failure to appreciate the integral unity of the phenomenological stance has resulted in many Western philosophical and scientific thinkers wrongly elevating scientific facts to an autonomous or divine-like level. Pope Pius XII, in his Encyclical *Summi Pontificatus* (October 20, 1939), hinted at this development when he asked the question as to what age, other than ours, in spite of its technological progress has been so deeply tormented by a spiritual poverty? His answer includes the observation that this emptiness, or spiritual poverty, generates a kind of hatefulness which leads humanity to become its own judge at the expense of the Supreme Judge. The Pope wrote:

When God is hated, every basis of morality is undermined: the voice of conscience is stilled or at any rate grows very faint, that voice which teaches even to the illiterate and to the uncivilized tribes what is good and what is bad, what lawful, what forbidden, and makes men

feel themselves responsible for their actions to a Supreme Judge.²¹⁵

In the 18th century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant defended, each in their way, the integrity of their world against an intrusion of a mechanical vision with its empiricism causing an artificial and fragmented world dominated by science. This fragmented world, in turn, led to individual and social alienation. Scientific empiricism put the emphasis on the “best” of possible worlds while forgetting traditional spiritual values. On the positive side, philosophers and theologians note that moral knowledge is not able to destroy the physical world. On the negative side, however, neglecting moral knowledge gives power to human destructive choices.

Plato, Copernicus and St Augustine, all considered knowledge not as a reserve of information stored in the memory but as an intrinsic part of the human being. The Orthodox way of thinking is sympathetic to this understanding. But in the West this unity has been de-constructed. In many cases knowledge has become nothing more than a tool intended for some specific task. Understood this way, knowledge becomes pure information and subsequently translated into bits of information which tend to depersonalize, mechanize and ultimately computerize the knower. Ultimately such intellectual alienation evolves into human alienation. Thus, individuals become alienated from divine knowledge and values. A cause of such alienation is an erroneous conception of the universe as separated and divided. Through this separation and division of knowledge in the knower, humanity itself becomes potentiality divided. This current vision, which remains dominant in the West, is artificial.

²¹⁵ Anne Fremantle, *The Papal Encyclicals in their Historical Context* (New York: Mentor, 1956), 264.

To recover our spiritual health and re-constitute our divided mind it is necessary for Western theologians to regain certain fundamental premises that have been known to Orthodox thinkers throughout the ages. This re-constituting phenomenological stance serves, in fact, as a pre-requisite for Western and Orthodox ecological understanding.

For Westerners to regain these fundamental premises, they have to realize first of all that personal knowledge is an important characteristic of the divine-human relationship. Orthodox theology, aided by a phenomenological understanding, is about revisiting the notion of knowledge as articulated by Plato, St Augustine and Copernicus. Many philosophers in the scholastic tradition have failed to properly realize this ancient understanding of knowledge within the contemporary world. These philosophers have become filled with “bits” of knowledge arising from the process of data processing and, as well, have become filled with specific technical knowledge which often is inappropriate to the context at hand. This makes our current metaphysical understanding a pathological one. Instead of enlightening us, knowledge creates confusion, and the accumulation of misinformation only aggravates the process of alienation. A knowledge that is foreign to the human spirit and to the values of human beings can only desensitize and alienate those who acquire it. Knowledge that risks de-humanization may be appropriate for a world conceived as a factory, but not for a world conceived as a Holy Temple. A system which exploits the economy, the environment and humanity cannot support knowledge that promotes the divine-human relationship. Such an exploitive vision transforms knowledge into mere information, transforms values into economic products and transforms human beings into merely technological experts, all unfit for the divine-human relationship.

Unlike many Orthodox theologians, Western philosophers tend more to follow the spirit of their times. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries mechanical and technical specialization altered Western civilization. As a result, we now live in a world where scientific knowledge redefines the concepts of nature and ecology. In the Western world we suffer from unprecedented social and individual distresses and anxiety. Seemingly beneficial technology has served as a crutch and we can no longer think or act by ourselves. When contemporary non-technological cultures speak about progress, and when we speak about the Green Revolution or about the elimination of illiteracy in the Third World, we often put faith in Western empirical, positivist, and analytical philosophy. We see that all economic international dealings are influenced by this western philosophical perspective. Even though Western philosophical thinking promotes this approach, Orthodox ecological theology opposes such activity and works to establish an alternative point of view. Orthodox ecological theology becomes a primary and proper tool for correct environmental relationships in life. We have to abandon the mechanical concept by which the western world understands itself and replace it with a much wider and richer conception such as is found in a phenomenological approach. In short, the spiritually bankrupt humanism of the western world needs to be replaced by a phenomenological humanitarian social construction of divine-human relationships.

The Message of an Orthodox Ecological Theology

Orthodox ecological theology is focused upon the spiritual relationships in life. Further, our preference for these relationships need not be justified in the eyes of the non-believing world. For the Orthodox theologian it is sufficient to

provide a witness to the spirituality inherent in life in the presence of the non-believer. Orthodox ecological theology implies a commitment to human values, to nature, and to life itself. Whereas, much of the philosophy studied in contemporary Western universities supporting an ecological understanding advocates a commitment to objectivism and detachment from a spiritual life-style. Orthodox ecological theology does not recognize either objectivism or detachment in this manner. Objectivism is an invention of the human intellect. It exists nowhere in nature. Objectivity, on the other hand, does exist as a spiritual, or noetic, quality of the observer and reflects the reasoned stance taken by the observer on reflection upon experience. Within a phenomenological objectivity, the observer is relationally inseparable from the observed and co-constitutes existence in a divine-human unity. Theologically, this relational unity is to be understood, for the Orthodox, in the sense of the mutual Trinitarian observation of the divine persons. A theology which avoids the Trinitarian engagement of life reflects a process of entropy which ultimately generates death.

Such a death-wish, as it were, is inherent in Western civilization and threatens contemporary theological social constructions. Orthodox ecological theology aspires to reverse this process. Orthodox ecological theology is spiritually alive, while the professional philosophy practiced in the Western-style university seems to be dying. Recall that Orthodox ecological theology has nothing to do with spiritualism, occult practices or religious cults. It is a dynamic and spiritual state of mind which is disclosed within a socially constructed *ecclesia*. In this state of dynamic existence we are endowed with grace and experience the world as if it were endowed with grace also. The Orthodox liturgy is an example, *par excellence*, of a spiritual experience as being endowed with grace. Inspired by the liturgy, Orthodox

ecological theology transforms the mere physical perception of the environment into a transcendental perception of the environment. The liturgy presents a participation in the divine life. If we approach the social construction of our environment, our cultural and spiritual inheritance, as a divine-human phenomenon it becomes evident that the existence of the sacred, the divine, is not accidental, but constitutes an experience of a graced world.

As noted above, professional philosophy is dying in the universities because it systematically excludes the life of the spirit. The nature of humanity is such that we strive to reach out within the cosmos but we must realize that our feet are placed solidly on earth. Orthodox ecological theology is characterized as global, unitary and synthetic while much contemporary philosophy supporting theology is national, fragmentary and analytical which does not provide a proper support for Orthodox theology. Orthodox ecological theology is credible, not because of an ability to contain everything and explain everything, but because of its insistence on reconciliation both on a physical and spiritual level. Orthodox ecological theology reveals that theologians have no other choice than to study the world in general and its global inter-relationships within a divine-human context that constitutes all of humanity. Conceived as global and synthetic Orthodox ecological theology is integrative, hierarchical and normative. Functioning as an integrative and normative activity, theological interpretation constitutes a community to meet the needs of the individual living within the cosmos.

Orthodox ecological theology is conscious of the environment and its life processes, whereas, contemporary utilitarian philosophies, with their national interests, tend to ignore these life processes. Orthodox ecological theology is not

utilitarian and does not limit its activities to the care of natural and material resources only. Human spiritual values are part of the wider specter of the environment constituting a divine-human relationship. Orthodox ecological theology focuses on saving of the quality of this divine-human relationship. Western philosophy tends to forget this saving quality of the relationship at times when it focuses on material progress and development. Western philosophy establishes a context which not only supports, but encourages inordinate material growth as it excludes the spiritual. Orthodox ecological theology is essentially concerned with humanitarian and social well-being as reflected through the divine Trinitarian relationship. Orthodox ecological theology views social construction as proper to human life and as an expression of human society. Thus, social construction needs to be recognized as a factor bringing about human *apotheosis* (divinization), through relationships patterned after the Trinity.

The task of Orthodox ecological theology today is to remove the limitations of utilitarian philosophy where it has become an instrument destructive of the environment. Orthodox ecological theology abolishes the Cartesian dualism introduced into Western experience and considers the divers relationships as constituting the same psychic, spiritual, and material entity. Humans are not machines that one repairs when out of service. Rather, they are persons of living complexity. To maintain balance in our conscious social constructions we must remain connected with transcendental life of the Trinity. To take care of our environmental health and well-being means being responsible, in like manner, for the universe which surrounds us.

This is the essential message of Orthodox ecological theology. We can influence every element of our social, individual, spiritual, ecological and political life, not separately,

but relationally through the Trinitarian pattern. This is in contrast to the merely secular life which addresses only a part of our being and, erroneously, considers this part as the whole. Orthodox ecological theology reveals our permanent relationship to the universe which is in perpetual movement as a divine-human unity. Thus, through changing ourselves and our relations with the universe, we participate in its continuous creation.

SECOND CASE STUDY: CANON LAW

The Canons: An Orthodox Phenomenological Social Construction

The social construction of the meaning of the canons is an activity undertaken by the members of the community for the benefit of the community. For the purposes of this study the canons, which are not all intended to be universally applied, include the Holy Canons of the Holy Apostles, the teachings of the First Seven Ecumenical Councils and the various canonical traditions of the Orthodox eparchies. These I present as examples of the theological social constructions arising out of Orthodoxy's experience of her beliefs. A canonical tradition has developed from these social constructions and this tradition is nothing less than the interpretation of these canons through a dialectical process of negotiation over existential issues. In the development of the canons there have always been divisions and conflicts within Orthodoxy over their interpretations. Within the Canon Law that resulted within Orthodoxy this difference is evident in the various jurisdictions that have developed, or, what some theologians have come to call the *canonicity* of the Orthodox

Church. Alexander Schmemmann has observed what he classes as an abnormal and divisive development:

For the first time in history division belongs to the very structure of the Church, for the first time canonicity seems strangely disconnected from its fundamental ‘content’ and purpose – to assure, express defend and fulfill the Church as Divinely given Unity, for the first time, in other terms, one seems to find normal a multiplicity of ‘jurisdictions.’²¹⁶

Ivan Žužek presents a contemporary understanding of canon law as it effects the social construction of the Church. In the Foreword to, *A Guide to the Eastern Code*, he writes that both codes, Latin and Oriental, comprise one corpus which “is merely an instrument for the achievement in the universal Church of that tranquility of order (*illum tranquillitatus ordinem*) which renders life in the ecclesial society easier.”²¹⁷ Relationships within Orthodoxy, disclosed as phenomenological social constructions, illustrate how the application of Canon Law varies across different categories of people, time and history. How social construction of relationships reflect collective interests, how the interpreters justify their usage of the canons and how the community tries to regulate the activities to which the canons are applied are the focal points of Orthodox phenomenological social construction.

In phenomenological social construction universality, as a concept, is problematic when interpreting social relationships. Not all relationships exist in all cultures to the same degree with the same significance or importance. Therefore, our attention must be focused on particular existential situations that constitute the

²¹⁶ Alexander Schmemmann, “Problems of Orthodoxy in America,” *St. Vladimir’s Seminary Quarterly* 8 (1964): 68.

²¹⁷ George Nedungatt, *A Guide to the Eastern Code* (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Orientale, 2002) 31.

phenomenon. Steven Engler points out that “one of the main values of a properly elaborated constructionist theory is that it specifies more clearly just how specific concepts and categories come to be constructed in specific contexts.”²¹⁸ Social construction in the interpretation of the canons, that is, deciding what one is to do in light of the canons connotes an allegiance to the theological principles that are shared by most, if not all, those who undertake the interpretation of the canons. However, this allegiance to theological principles does not imply a corresponding theory of universal governance. I suggest, then, that canonical social construction is initially and fundamentally an activity that analyses the constitution of a specific phenomena of human experience. Subsequent universal application may or may not be appropriate depending on the universality of the individual human experience.

Orthodox Social Construction One: The Language of Interpretation of the Canons is Participatory Language, not Descriptive Language

Our language reflects an understanding of our pastoral point of view. The main object of concern in interpreting the canons is the inner disposition and intention behind one's actions for the community's well-being. Given the sinful condition of all members of a community the interpretation of the canons is to safeguard the interests of the community from the intervention of those whose intentions and actions may be harmful to the community. From this motivation canons emerged during the earliest times in

²¹⁸ Steven Engler, “Two Problems with Constructionism in the Study of Religion,” *Rever: Revista de Estudos da Religião* 4 (2005): 30. <www.pucsp.br/rever/rv4_2005/p_engler.pdf> (28 Sept., 2007).

response to the needs of the ecclesiastical community. Canons are thus rooted in a participatory activity based on the existential needs of the community, not on a theoretical understanding within the community. These existential needs included the purpose of seeking “to correct and reform the repentant sinner and to protect the community from the resulting sin.”²¹⁹ This is significant since a sense of sin has been somewhat lost in the contemporary Western theological context. Prof. Michael Melchizedek notes that “Orthodox Canon law is corrective in nature (responding to a situation once it has occurred) and not prescriptive in character (anticipating a situation before it actually takes place).” This understanding reflects that sin is understood within the holy canons as an ecclesial issue and not as a private one.²²⁰ Eugenio Corecco lends further support to this purpose of canon law when he writes:

Canonical discipline also guarantees the objectivity of the ecclesial experience, as it teaches individual Christians and churches that they must overcome the temptation of individualism and that fidelity to communion is essential for the self-realization of the Church.²²¹

Within the Western canonical tradition, the significance of sin plays a lesser part in the formation of the canons which deal with the governance of the Roman faithful. In its interpretative role the Codex Canonicus is to be a norm for the people because the

²¹⁹ Lewis Patsavos, *Spiritual Dimensions of the Holy Canons* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2003), 15.

²²⁰ The Holy Canons of the Orthodox Church from the Pedalion [Rudder] (2004). Eparchy of Nebraska Study Binder.

²²¹ Eugenio Corecco, *The Theology of Canon Law: A Methodological Question*. (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1992), 3.

law is “an effective instrument to guide the life of the people of God. The Code is so rooted in the decrees of Vatican II that its practical intent should be obvious – the promotion of pastoral renewal and reform.”²²² This intent of the Western Church is similar to what Alexander Schmemmann notes as the intent of the canons in Orthodoxy. He writes that “canons do not constitute or create the church, their function is to defend, clarify and regulate the life of the Church, to make it comply with the essence of the Church.”²²³

Participation in life, not a description of life, determines the “goods” of life. In interpreting the canons it is obvious that what is well intentioned and suited to one community’s participation may not be so well suited to another community’s participation. Similarly, what is good for the Church as a whole may not apply in local situations. In other words, what is good in one age may be a hindrance in another. Should universality, that is, the accepted interpretation by the Church as a whole come about this would mean that there can be no local departure in the interpretation of the canons. To avoid this difficult situation it helps to remember that the canons are pastoral texts written to address specific needs of the community and guide the spiritual life of its members at a given time in the church’s historical development. The canons do not merely describe the Church’s past life. Patrick Viscuso, notes that Matthew Blastares, a monk

²²² James Coriden, Thomas Green, and Donald Heintschel, *The Code of Canon Law: Text and Commentary* (Mahweh, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1985), 20.

²²³ Alexander Schmemmann, “Problems of Orthodoxy in America,” *St. Vladimir’s Seminary Quarterly* 8 (1964): 75.

of the Order of St Basil, who lived in the 14th Century and studied theology and canon law, was of this opinion.²²⁴

In the process of interpreting the canons one cannot use criteria at variance with the living tradition of the Church. In fact, as Spencer Estabrooks of the St. Arseny Institute, Winnipeg, Manitoba, has written that the interpretation of the canons of the Church cannot be separated from the Church's life for such an interpretation would lead people to be satisfied with detailed laws and thus forget the goal and "norm" or standard of the Gospel.²²⁵ This concern increases as Orthodoxy, or any ecclesial corporation, adopts attitudes similar to the law and organization of the civil government which is based on secular administration experience. In North America, some areas where difficulties with social construction could occur are 1) over the English translations of the canons, 2) over the classification of the canons, 3) over the codification of the canons and 4) over the regular reception of communion in the Orthodox Churches. Difficulties over social construction in North America occur because most canonical material is only available in the European cities of Rome, Paris, Munich, and Strasbourg and has been written with an eye to the European context, not the North American context. European participation in the life of Orthodoxy differs from North American participation in the life of Orthodoxy. Within contemporary North American Orthodox theology interpretations from civil law are not to encroach and adversely affect the interpretation of the Church's experience by her members.

²²⁴ Patrick Viscuso, "A Late Byzantine Theology of Canon Law," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 34 (1989): 212.

²²⁵ Spencer Estabrooks (no date). "Regular Communion as an Example of Issues in the Interpretation and Application of Canon Law," unpublished manuscript in the possession of the researcher.

The concern over the relationship between Orthodoxy and the State has important historical roots. It is a legacy, common to the Eastern and Western Churches, of the social construction of the “Church of Constantine” which overshadowed the “Church of Christ” in the lives of the Christian faithful. Anne Fremantle succinctly states the problem that the contemporary church has inherited.

Many new problems arose for the Church when the emperors became Christian. The persecutions were over; the state was no longer hostile. But the Church’s relationship with a Catholic ruler was far more complicated than with pagan, or later, Saracen. For the emperors, in spite of their personal Christian faith, were also the inheritors of the Roman tradition, in which the state was paramount, and religion a department of that state.²²⁶

Within Orthodox theology the canons exist to preserve a mystery. This differs from the Latin view. The canons are not to be understood as descriptive constitutional norms as has become the case in the Western tradition of canonical interpretation. In Orthodox theology there is no distinction between the *jus divinum* and the *jus humanum* as is the case with the Latin *Codex Canonicus*. As Lewis Patsavos notes:

Within the canonical tradition of the Orthodox Church, the Holy Canons are not the basis of the Church’s formation, but are derived from her following her formation. The Church was not established as a legal institution eventually filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, but was

²²⁶ Anne Fremantle, *The Papal Encyclicals in their Historical Context* (New York: Mentor, 1956), 46.

formed as the mystery of the the anthropic communion in Christ through the incarnation of the Logos.²²⁷

Eugenio Corecco promotes this view when he writes:

The Eastern Church has never surrendered to the temptation of separating the visible Church from the invisible one. In contrast to the Latin Church's propensity to pay great attention to earthly ecclesial realities, the Orthodox Church has always preferred to contemplate the ontology of the ecclesial realities.²²⁸

Within the context contemplating the ontology of ecclesial realities, or simply the Church, Panagiotes Carras understands the principle of *oeconomia* in the more ancient manner of "provision for" something as opposed to the more modern understanding of *oeconomia* as "exemption from penalty." *Oeconomia* is the "application of a canon for a particular instance, a particular need that calls for particular attention. An *oeconomia* can never overthrow the canons, it can never be contrary to the essence, to the spirit, to the doctrine hidden behind the canon."²²⁹ Phenomenological social construction arising from the application of *oeconomia* may be seen as "above all a living personal relationship with God; it is life that is truly life because it is a participation in the divine life itself, because it is a life of communion," according to John Erikson.²³⁰

²²⁷ Lewis Patsavos, *Spiritual Dimensions of the Holy Canons* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2003), 45.

²²⁸ Eugenio Corecco, *The Theology of Canon Law: A Methodological Question*. (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1992), 59.

²²⁹ Panagiotes Carras, *The Canons and Their Significance*. (Seattle, WA: St Nectarios Orthodox Press, 1980), 87.

²³⁰ John Erikson, "The Orthodox Canonical Tradition," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 27 (1983): 156.

Orthodox Social Construction Two: The Epistemology of the Canons is of "Being," not "Knowing."

William Shakespeare was not an epistemological philosopher but he was an insightful thinker. His literary legacy bears philosophical attention. Thus, we may consider Hamlet's famous soliloquy: "To be or not to be, that is the question..." from a philosophical perspective.²³¹ Hamlet did not say: "To know or not to know, that is the question..." In Shakespeare's pre-Cartesian mind "being," not "knowing," establishes the identity of the person. It is the same within phenomenological social construction in that "being," not "knowing," establishes the identity of the person. We are first existential beings before we are philosophical knowers. Thus, we are beings who subsequently come to know the canons through our experience. From this perspective, Nicholas Afanasiev's remarks about the historical existence and the essence of the Church are enlightening.

We come to a very important conclusion: the interrelationship between the Church's historical existence [knowledge of herself/canons] and her essence [her being] is such that the historical existence [knowledge of herself/canons] is that form in which the essence [the being] of the Church is embodied in history.²³²

Thus, the canons express the concrete, socially constructed reality of the being of the church as a set of relationships among believers and God. I am not suggesting here that these relationships arise from a theoretical description of relationships

²³¹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet: Prince of Denmark*. Act III, Scene I.

²³² Nicholas Afanasiev, "The Canons of the Church: Changeable or Unchangeable?," *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 11 (1967): 59.

understood as knowledge of fixed categories to which we must conform. Rather, I am suggesting that the phenomenological reality constructed by these relationships is a dynamic and living socially constructed reality arising from reflections on the life of the Trinity. “The Church, like every Christian mystery, has her origin in the mystery of the unity and plurality of the Trinity, and it is in the Trinity that she has her ultimate explanation,” Corecco tells us.²³³ This is in keeping with the understanding that the church is a divine-human organism who distinguishes herself as a community from all other social organizations that are not constructed after the manner of the Trinity.

Given a phenomenological understanding of the social construction of the canons of the Orthodox Church she cannot separate the *jus divinum* (divine law) from the *jus humanum* (human law) into distinct entities. The *jus divinum* and the *jus humanum* are only distinguishable. Together, as a phenomenological entity, they constitute the divine-human organism. Further, Orthodoxy never confuses decrees, which are legal interpretations, with canons. The former are classified as *nomoi* and the latter as *kanones*. However, when either decrees or canons are constructed socially or interpreted phenomenologically this reflects a creative attitude towards life. The view that canons are unchangeable or immutable amounts to a rejection of the creative dynamic of life, and ultimately of dynamic being.

The phenomenological interpretation of the canons requires that one “search out those norms for structure and conduct that necessarily arise from and conform to the very nature of the Church as the Spirit-filled body of Christ,”

²³³ Euggenio Corecco, “The Bishop as Head of the Local Church and Its Discipline” *Concilium* 38 (1968): 88.

according to Erikson.²³⁴ In other words the Church gives the form and structure to the canons, not vice versa, that is, the canons giving form and structure to the Church. Thus, no juridical system will ever be completely adequate to express the true being of the Church which Christians only come to know through experience. There is an appreciation of Eastern theology within the Western Church when it comes to the interpretation of canon law. This is documented through the phenomenological approach, or stance, taken by some Western canonists. Ladislav Örsy remarks that “the study of hermeneutics makes the interpreter aware that *there is more to a text than its conceptual and logical content*” [Örsy’s italics].²³⁵ Since, strictly speaking, phenomenology is not a philosophical system but a philosophical stance, or attitude to life, it is able to transcend the limitations of all epistemological philosophies. Common to both Eastern and Western traditions is the notion that canon law is a guide for the faithful. This was noted above by the Western authors, James Coriden, Thomas Green and Donald Heintschel.²³⁶ The canons illustrate and illuminate the life of Christ in the community. Such illumination is beneficial for both the individual and the community since the Church as a divine-human organism is composed of members who are commissioned to carry out the threefold mission of Christ as priest, prophet and king.

But what of the phenomenological existence of the Uniate Churches? one may ask. Uniate Churches are in favour of

²³⁴ John Erikson, “The Orthodox Canonical Tradition” *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 27 (1983): 167.

²³⁵ Ladislav Örsy, *Theology and Canon Law: New Horizons for Legislation and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 69.

²³⁶ James Coriden, Thomas Green, and Donald Heintschel, *The Code of Canon Law: Text and Commentary* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1985), 20.

adopting Latin discipline and adopting Roman Law suitable to their purposes. Thanks to the Orthodox branches of the Uniate Churches, however, “Latinization has made far less progress in the Eastern Catholic Churches of the Byzantium rite.”²³⁷ Yet, despite the positive affect of Orthodoxy some suspicion about Orthodoxy, on the part of the Uniate Churches, remains. Thus, Orthodox believers cannot fail to be suspect of overtures for unity made to them by the Roman Catholic Church. Ivan Žužek writes that “it is worth noting, despite the common declaration of Pope John Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras of December 7, 1965, on the ‘consignment to oblivion’ of the anathemas of 1054, the canonical separation between the two Churches still exists.”²³⁸ In both East and West, theology and praxis often have developed independently of each other and this development has given rise to differing ecclesiologies and their systems of canon law. The differing ecclesiologies and systems of canon law contributed to the break which came at the great schism. In the West, “scholasticism has little by little hardened certain positions of St Thomas, thus making the dialogue with the Orthodox still more difficult.”²³⁹ The hardening of certain positions has not shown any signs of softening in respect to dialogue with the Orthodox since 1968. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in 2007, issued a document in response to certain ecclesial questions, and responded “to these questions by clarifying the authentic meaning of some ecclesiological expressions used by the Magisterium which are open to

²³⁷ Neophytos Edelly, “Unity or Plurality of Codes: Should the Eastern Churches Have a Special Code?” *Concilium* 28 (1967): 38

²³⁸ Ivan Žužek, “Opinions on the Future Structure of Oriental Canon Law,” *Concilium* 28 (1967): 146.

²³⁹ Ivan Žužek, “The Sacramental Canon Law of the Christian East,” *Concilium* 38 (1968): 148.

misunderstanding in the debate.”²⁴⁰ It concluded that the word “subsists,” referring to the Church of Christ, can mean that it subsists only, in its fullness, in the Catholic Church. The reference is clearly to the notion of “being” and not to the notion of “knowing” and thus remains problematic for Orthodox theologians.

Orthodox Social Construction Three: Continual Interpretation, not Fixed Interpretation

In light of what has been discussed above it is clear that any contemporary theological social construction requires of theologians a continual interpretation of experience. It is an unsatisfactory practice to rely on the theoretical and fixed interpretations of the past. Many theologians are expressing a need to up-date theological thinking as part of the larger Western societal experience. From this enterprise Orthodoxy is not exempt. Yet, to form a Code of Canon Law, in the Latin sense, for Orthodoxy as part of any theological up-dating would be contrary to the Eastern spirit. Various attempts at such theological up-dating have been made in the past and as recently as 1930. But nothing came of these attempts to establish a commission in which scholars of all Orthodox Churches would be represented. It is to be remembered that, within Orthodoxy, only an ecumenical council has authority to define dogma, impose obligatory discipline, introduce new or reform existing canons. Ivan Žužek notes that A. Christophilopoulos is also of

²⁴⁰ Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine of the Church.

<http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responsa-quaestiones_en.html> (28 Sept., 2007).

the opinion that a common Code for Orthodox churches is impossible because of the autocephalous character of each national church.²⁴¹

Canons and regulations, opinions and commentaries, arising from the late Byzantine period, often have no application to the altered conditions of contemporary Orthodox life. However, there are theological principles arising from the experience of the faithful that remain constant and must be addressed if the community is to continue to growth in the faith. This debate of how to interpret the canons requires a common focal point arising within contemporary experience. We experience ourselves in a dynamic and living environment that requires a dynamic and living interpretation, not a fixed interpretation. The past cannot act as a prison for Orthodoxy as John Meyendorff has remarked.

The debate simply cannot be brought to a fruitful conclusion unless everyone acknowledges the rather obvious fact that both the Byzantine and the Ottoman empires do not exist anymore, and that the world to which Orthodox witness is to be made relevant is a world dominated by other powers and realities.²⁴²

In fact, contemporary Orthodox social construction, like other sectors of Christianity, is in a period of re-evaluating and up-dating which, in practice, is closer to a *ressourcement* than an *aggiornamento* as was mentioned above. There are cultural changes taking place that require canonical regulation, that is, interpretation, with respect to the behaviour of the faithful in

²⁴¹ Ivan Žužek, "A Code for the Orthodox Churches," *Concilium* 48 (1969): 150 [A. Christophilopoulos, *Hellenikon Ekklesiastikon Dikaion* (Athens, 1965), pp. 12-17].

²⁴² John Meyendorff, *Living Tradition: Orthodox Witness in the Contemporary World* (New York: St Vladimir's Press, 1978), 112.

light of gospel values. In fulfilling this purpose a return to the Patristic sources will provide a more adequate guidance for present-day interpretation than a mere up-dating of language and editing of legal texts. Certain Roman authors, living in the same western cultural matrix as Orthodox theologians, have expressed it this way. “Like other periods of church reform, the post-Vatican II Church requires laws to stabilize long-term shifts of practice and discipline.”²⁴³ The reform of which they speak applies equally to the Orthodox traditions.

²⁴³ James Coriden, Thomas Green, and Donald Heintschel, *The Code of Canon Law: Text and Commentary* (Mahweh, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1985), 21.

PART THREE

PHENOMENOLOGY IN THE FUTURE OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

General Summation

I conclude this essay into phenomenology as an interpretive tool for the Orthodox theologian by way of a general summation. I propose that certain of the shifts that have become evident in the movement away from a scholastic Western philosophical understanding to an existential phenomenological philosophical interpretation support this claim. Two case studies of social construction in Orthodox theology were presented which formed a crucible to gage the activity in theological thinking currently taking place. I have shown that present theological activity occurring within Orthodoxy is affected by an evolutionary process in the philosophical way of thinking. This was demonstrated by examining two social constructions within Orthodoxy, ecology and canon law, through three “moments of interpretive activity.” One moment was language as participatory, not descriptive, the second moment was epistemology as being, not knowing and the third moment was interpretation as continual, not fixed. I noted that the human way of thinking, the thoughtful stance, is not limited to one cultural expression, but is reflected within a variety of cultural contexts. As a result humanity lives within an evolutionary and historical interpretation of its environment was unavailable to the ancient Hellenic philosophers, both Socratic and Presocratic. They had no knowledge of the phenomenological understanding of cultural expression in the thought processes of the human mind, nor in its social constructions.

Today, we recognize that there is a variety of ways of cultural contacts in which to understand our experience by rendering it concrete through social construction. In many contemporary social constructions a phenomenological approach replaces the metaphysical of classical philosophy in actualizing our understanding. Phenomenological philosophy has become an alternative understanding to traditional Western metaphysical epistemology. I have shown that interest in human activity in the world eventually gives rise to an understanding of a phenomenological social construction of the human environment. From a phenomenological perspective, human acts generate a conscious social construction on the part of the individual and on the part of the community. Phenomenological social construction does not arise from theory. Therefore, in understanding social construction theologically, we must no longer seek truth in theoretical representations but, rather, we seek to experience truth by leaving the question of truth open so that God may freely act in conjunction with humans.

A phenomenological approach to theological understanding does not “encapsulate” theological understanding. To encapsulate theological understanding is a return to theoretical understanding of the scholastic perspective. The phenomenological approach liberates, not constrains, human understanding as it introduces new perspectives. The Orthodox theologian seeks to experience truth from the standpoint of the Gospel and tradition from a non-encapsulated existential perspective. We have seen that, in the European and American philosophical climate, developments in thinking are taking place that reflect less of the Aristotelian perspective and disclose more of the phenomenological (Continental) perspective. We have also seen that this phenomenological climate aids Orthodox theological interpretation.

In the Western context religious interpretation, in general, is moving from a predominately objective point of view to a more subjective point of view. This movement, with its various interpretations, within contemporary belief, in both Latin and Orthodox Churches, generates a lack of uniform social construction and lacks a single institutional religious praxis. We have seen that Orthodoxy was never totally dominated by classical philosophy, yet, it has not totally escaped the societal influence generated by the modern pluralistic way of thinking and belief. As a result contemporary Orthodox belief, as influenced by modern thinking, seems to have abandoned many earlier social constructions of Orthodox religious traditions understanding them as antiquated and meaningless. But, the case is, as phenomenology continues to introduce new philosophical perspectives into Western and Eastern religious belief, Orthodox theologians continually review their philosophical perspectives to remain faithful to the theological notion of *semper reformanda* in their social constructions.

Since religious social construction carries the intended meaning and does not create meaning, the problem is a qualitative, hence, personal one and not a theoretical or impersonal one. The intended meaning to be reflected in Orthodox theological social constructions is susceptible to recognition by other like minds. In this recognition, Orthodox social construction is not constituted by a specific definition of religious truth but invites an existential understanding on the part of the theologian in experiencing of truth. In the experience of truth it must be noted that existential anxiety will most likely be present in varying degrees in any belief system. The Orthodox theologian's experience of alienation, due to the ontological dichotomy between religious understanding and experience, gives rise to varying degrees of legitimate theological

uncertainty. Such anxiety may be resolved by engaging in an appropriate phenomenological and qualitative interpretation, rather than relying on a somewhat foreign philosophical ideology characteristic of the West.

We have seen that phenomenological interpretive anxiety may be overcome to a great degree through an intentional reconciliation among God, ourselves and all humanity. This reconciliation reflects the Orthodox spiritual understanding that humanity has never been separated from that which is divine. I conclude that the Orthodox theologian's interpretive perspective, and subsequent social construction, generate meaning derived from the experience of the divine presence in the world. A reconciliatory interpretive approach does not merely describe the understanding of the divine presence in the world; it actively restores unity. Social constructions that restore unity are not based on mere descriptions but are actively crafted through human experience. Further, the intimations of a divine presence in human experience give rise to a certain expectation of encountering that presence on the part of all believers.

As noted earlier, phenomenological philosophical thinking is being rediscovered in the Western philosophical world. Phenomenological philosophical thinking is an approach similar to, but not identical with, an earlier method of interpretation, that is, the pre-scientific method. As we have seen this rediscovery leads to tension in theological interpretation between empirical thinking, which stresses facts and phenomenological thinking, which stresses values. This phenomenological tension is beneficial for Eastern theologians since the phenomenological interpretive approach is supported by the fact that contemporary Orthodoxy has a sufficient philosophical grounding to avoid the traditional mistakes of the

West. The phenomenological approach is, strictly speaking, neither purely rational nor purely empirical but it is a conscious interpretive combination of practical thinking and experience that is characteristic of Orthodoxy.

The earlier schools of theology, which came into being before the recognition of a multifaith theology, had already defined the word 'theology' from a Judeo-Christian perspective. Thus, theology has been identified with committed Judeo-Christian studies, whereas, religion has been identified with the uncommitted study of religious belief. Phenomenology is not concerned solely with the uncommitted study of religion but also with the committed study of theology. An advantage of the phenomenological approach, given our contemporary concern with individuality, is its potential for the self-revelation of the interpreter. This self-revelation of the interpreter cannot be accomplished in the uncommitted study or of religion. In the committed study of theology as we interpret the interpretations of others we find something similar our own experience in their accounts. In interpreting theology, it must be remembered that the phenomenological approach is only one of a number of methods of interpretation, nor does not present itself as a philosophical system.

Given phenomenology's diversity of understanding, no one group of phenomenologists enjoys a monopoly in interpretation. Orthodox theologians experience this diversity in phenomenological interpretation in a context of existentialist philosophy which has a wide response among individuals. This is in contrast to other modes of contemporary philosophy, particularly New Age philosophies, which require a high degree of conformity in thinking. I conclude that in the development of phenomenology something greater than mere adaptive change occurs within the phenomenological interpretive approach.

Along with the adaptive change, an essential change occurs in the person as well. This essential change generates a re-structuring of the personal and collective understanding of the individual. The re-structuring of the personal and collective understanding of the individual alters the subject, as well as, the perceived object. In a scholastic interpretive approach the object of interpretation, the independent Platonic ideal, is not altered. In a phenomenological interpretive approach the web of meanings, which affects the social construction of theological meaning, is altered. The social construction of these meanings places emphasis on dynamic intersubjectivity. Thus, a religious phenomenological interpretation brings about a spiritual self-transformation. But such a phenomenological spiritual self-transformation is not recognized by all theologians. Many still seek truth as expressed in theoretical terms that have become fixed in a particular form of expression that is itself perceived to be as valid as the truth.

I note that the Western experience of the scientific way of knowing is the present fashionable way of knowing. However, I recommend the alternative, the phenomenological way of knowing, to Orthodox and Latin theologians. Phenomenological understanding is a new kind of qualitative knowing which incorporates analytical thinking into one's experience. A phenomenological approach generates social construction out of personal experience, the truth of which has no extramental existence. A phenomenological interpretation remains open to the future while rooted in the present. Enlightened Orthodox phenomenological theologians understand that the preservation of former conceptualizations of experience are not necessary and that such openness to the future is possible for persons or communities who have come to know who they are in the present moment of this incarnated life.

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Carlton, C. *The Truth: What Every Roman Catholic Should Know About the Orthodox Church*. Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 1999.

This book is written in an easily readable academic style. While making reference to the early philosophical issues that influenced the development of doctrine and dogma no in-depth investigation of these issues was carried out by the author. On the whole the book is a credible presentation of the significant issues separating Orthodox and Catholic thought over significant theological points of view. However, as a Roman Catholic, I suggest that non-Catholic readers not overlook the author's own disclaimer. In the Preface he writes: "My analysis of the differences between Orthodoxy and Protestantism was rooted in my own experience. My knowledge of Roman Catholicism, however, is entirely second-hand."

Jeanrond, W. G. *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance*. New York: Crossroad, 1991.

This is a survey book written within an interdisciplinary perspective. It is concise and focuses on the relationship between phenomenology and theology, thus providing an excellent orientation within theological phenomenology. The author is conscious that Christian interpretation takes place within a pluralistic context.

Michalopoulos, G. and H. Ham. *The American Orthodox Church: A History of its Beginnings*. Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 2003.

This book, though not bearing on the immediate subject matter of this dissertation, is an interesting one to read. It assisted this

researcher in appreciating some of the cultural background and historical conflicts of the establishment of Orthodox in America.

Morris, T. V. (ed). *The Concept of God*. (Oxford Readings in Philosophy) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

This is an edited work on recent philosophical theology which, according to the editor, “has shed a great deal of light on both the nature and implications of a good many traditional theistic affirmations.” The writers attempt to conceive God in non-classical categories which reflect diversity and commonalities within the modern experience.

Meyendorff, J. [ed. N. Lossky] *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today*, [4th rev ed]. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996.

While interesting and informative from an historical point of view, this book like those written by other Orthodox authors annotated in this list, contributes little to the topic addressed in this dissertation. That is, there is little of a philosophical and theological discussion in the chapters of the book. Though Meyendorff does note: “Elements of Byzantine theological scholarship, however, continued to be maintained by a handful of outstanding churchman. Some of these were self-taught; others studies in the West and frequently came under the influence of their Catholic and Protestant teachers.”

Platt, D. *Intimations of Divinity*. New York: Peter Lang, 1989.

A useful book concerning itself with the phenomenological understanding of God. Writing in an informal manner, the author discusses issues of ontology, empirical study, person, evil, and ‘divinity’ and ‘God’ as philosophical categories. He concludes that intimations of divinity are empirically useful.

Roberts, J. D. *A Philosophical Introduction to Theology*.
Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991.

This book assesses the influence of Greek thought on theological concepts from pre- Socratic times through classical and medieval periods to the twentieth century. The arrangement of the subject matter assists with clarifying possible ideological confusion.

Steuer, A D & McClendon, J. W. *Is God God?* Nashville:
Abingdon, 1981.

The chapter, 'In search of a God-concept,' by Axel Steuer, Gordon Kaufman and William Alston, discusses conceptualizing God in contemporary times, not relying on classical categories. A related chapter, 'The availability of God,' by Charles Davis and Paul van Buren, discusses the experience of God and speaking about God.

Watts, F. & Williams, M. *The Psychology of Religious Knowing*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

This text is written from within a phenomenological approach to understanding. The conceptualization of God, world and self are treated from the point of view of cognitive psychology. According to the authors the process of arriving at personal insight is parallel in many ways to arriving at religious insight. This text is positively written, and an antireligious bias is not part of the authors' mind-set.

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